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FAME

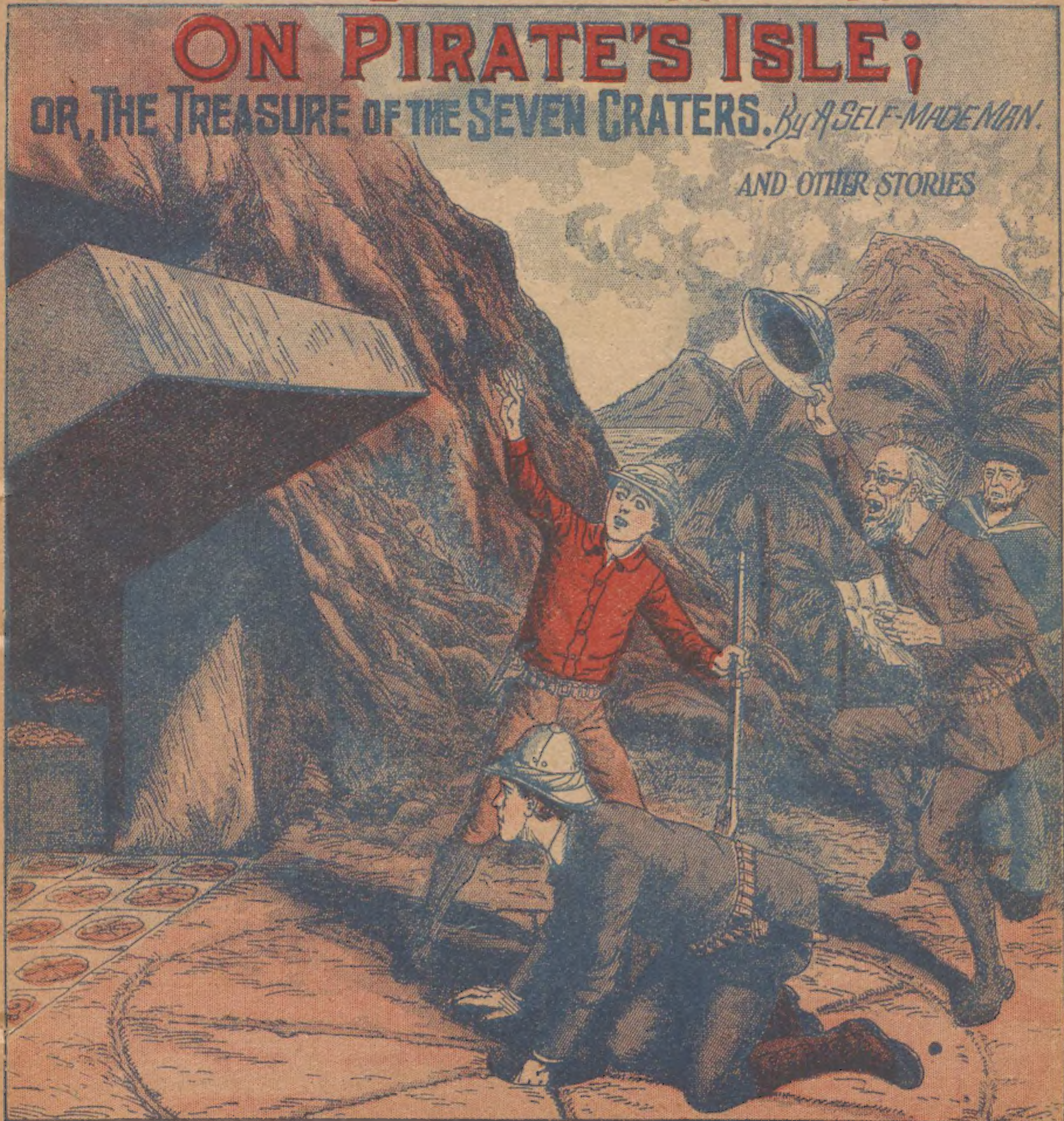
Price 8 Cents

FORTUNE WEEKLY

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

ON PIRATE'S ISLE; OR, THE TREASURE OF THE SEVEN CRATERS. *By A SELF-MADE MAN.*

AND OTHER STORIES



As Val pressed the knob in the basin-like hole a remarkable change took place in the apparently solid surface of the rock. A ponderous stone, working on an axis, swung downward into a horizontal position revealing a room beyond.

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

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NEW YORK, JANUARY 15, 1926

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ON PIRATE'S ISLE

OR, THE TREASURE OF THE SEVEN CRATERS

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.—The Island of the Seven Craters.

"We seem to be up against it hard, Tom," said Valentine Vance to his chum, Tom Messenger. "If there is anything worse under the sun than to be becalmed in a tropical sea I'd like to know what it is."

"That's right, Val. It's been as hot as blue blazes all day, and not a breath of air to fan a fellow's parboiled face. The sinking sun does not seem to bring a bit of relief as far as I can see. There isn't a cloud in the sky, nor a ripple on the ocean anywhere. Looks as if we're as good as anchored for the night."

"And for to-morrow, and to-morrow night, and next day, if no longer, as well. Jack Junk says you never can tell just how long these calms may last."

"Doesn't it put you somewhat in mind of the 'Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner' with his painted ship upon a painted ocean?"

"It does, with the horrors left out. That poem was enough to curdle your blood if read under proper conditions. The only person on board who seems to be at all contented with the present state of affairs is Professor Scotchley. He seems able to stand any amount of roasting. I believe if he was fried over a slow fire he wouldn't kick if he had his beloved box of specimens to monkey over."

"There is another chap aboard who enjoys this roasting even better than the professor."

"You mean——"

"Hop Hi, the cook."

"The chief mate made him hop high to-day with a rope's end for spoiling the soup," chuckled Val. "He's a pretty clever Chink, just the same. Seems to have taken a shine to you and me and the professor."

"That's because we tip him off every once in a while," said Tom. "Nobody else aboard gives him a cent."

"He doesn't look for a tip from anybody else. We're passengers and are supposed to come up for any little extra attention on his part. I wonder what island that is which we have sighted. There's a lot of smoke coming from the top of it. Just as if there were several big factory chimneys down there working overtime."

"Must be volcanic craters in action," replied Tom. "I'll borrow the mate's glass and we'll get a better look at them before night shuts them out."

Tom walked off toward the poop, or quarter deck, where the chief mate was fanning himself under the broad awning which had been spread to ward off the fierce heat of the sun, leaving Val standing by the bulwark in the waist of the vessel gazing at the distant island.

Drifting, but so slowly that her motion was scarcely noticeable, the American full-rigged ship Golden Gate rested on the bosom of the vast South Pacific Ocean. She was bound from San Francisco to Sidney, Australia, and after a prosperous voyage up to this point, had run into a calm belt that stopped her further progress for the time being. Ever since the sun rose that morning there had scarcely been wind enough to carry a feather. It was now close on to sundown, and the air became so rarefied by the intense heat that the crew were stretched out under an awning over the forecabin, languid and listless.

The wheel aft was lashed and deserted, for the vessel did not even have steerage way. The dead calm was terribly tedious to all on board, except Professor Scotchley, perhaps, who seemed to find pleasure and satisfaction under any circumstances in examining and cataloguing his boxes of natural history and other specimens.

The professor had persuaded Captain Rynders to put in for a few hours at several small islands en route so that he could go ashore and look up a few new specimens.

The two boys and a sailor named Jack Junk had accompanied the naturalist on these brief excursions, not because they took any interest in his hobby, but to enjoy a change from the rolling deck of the ship.

Although all hands found the sun sizzling hot in crossing the line, still the strong breeze which propelled the ship on her way tempered the heat to a considerable degree, and they did not feel the same discomfort as that which attended this calm.

Valentine Vance and Tom Messenger were both California boys, born and bred. They were members of the order called "Native Sons of the Golden West." Val's father, now dead, had been a '49er. He had worked in the gold diggings,

made a good haul in gold dust and invested it afterward in San Francisco real estate, which netted him a fortune. Then he started to speculate in mining stocks with the expectation of becoming a millionaire, and narrowly missed fetching up in the poorhouse. Val and his widowed mother were now living in a modest way on the wreck of his fortune, but the boy was smart and ambitious, and hoped to make a fortune for himself when he got to be a man. Tom Massenger was the son of a well-to-do architect, still in the land of the living, and had about everything at his command that his heart could wish for. He and Val, in spite of the difference of their social stations, were sworn friends and companions—a miniature edition of Pylades and Orestes, two famous Greeks whose friendship for each other was proverbial. A serious illness had so undermined Tom's vitality that the family physician recommended a long sea voyage to build him up. Tom only consented to take this trip on condition that Val accompany him.

Accordingly, Mr. Massenger agreed to defray Val's expenses, and secured his mother's consent to his taking the journey.

Professor Scotchley, who was Tom's private tutor, was sent with the boys to see that they didn't get into trouble, and to increase their fund of general knowledge. When the Golden Gate got into the clutches of the calm the party had been at sea many weeks—long enough to tire the boys somewhat with the monotonous sameness of sea and sky, with an occasional island thrown in. The calm was bad enough, but there was another cause for gloom on board of the ship. Captain Rynders had been stricken with apoplexy the day before, and his death was looked for owing to the lack of expert medical treatment.

When Tom Massenger went on the poop to ask the chief mate for the loan of his telescope, the second mate was watching by the captain's berth in his stateroom. Tom would have preferred asking the favor of the second mate, but as the case stood it was the chief mate or nobody he had to go to.

William Gotch was not a handsome man by any means, though Nature, as if to make amends, had given him a strong, well-knit figure. The usual expression of his feature was one of sullenness, as if he was afflicted with a perpetual frown against the world.

"Mr. Gotch, may I borrow your telescope?" asked Tom, politely.

The chief mate lazily shifted his position in the reclining chair that belonged to the captain and gave the boy a cold stare.

"What do you want with it?" he growled, surlily.

"Val and I want to examine that island in the distance. There seems to be craters on it throwing out a great deal of smoke."

"Craters!" ejaculated the mate, sitting up. "Where is this island?"

"Yonder," replied Tom, waving his arm in the direction where the land lay.

"Go into the passage and fetch the glass you will find hanging there. I will take a squint at the island."

Tom left the poop, entered the passage leading from the main deck to the cabin, unshipped the

telescope from its fastenings, and brought it up to the chief mate.

He sighted the distant island and gazed at it some moments with attention.

"That is the Island of the Seven Craters," he said. Then he handed the glass to Tom, and after rolling a cigarette in an indolent way, lit it and fell back in his former listless attitude. Tom carried the spyglass to where Val stood leaning over the bulwark.

"Mr. Gotch says that's the Island of the Seven Craters," said Tom, as he raised the glass and took a peep at the far-off land.

"The Island of the Seven Craters," repeated Val. "That's a curious name. I thought that smoke came from volcanic craters. That island must be the summit of a great submerged mountain peak. It would be a pretty high one if it started from the surface of the earth."

"I guess it would," said Tom. "Here, take a look. You can see the craters quite plainly though the glass." While Val was looking one of the sailors approached them. This was Jack Junk, the seaman who had accompanied the professor and the two boys ashore when that privilege was accorded them. His was not a reassuring countenance by any means. A man with a broken nose, a shifty glint of the eye, and an indefinable sinister expression about the mouth, is apt to be handicapped in that respect.

"What are ye squintin' at, my hearties?" asked Junk, in a foghorn voice.

"That you, Jack?" said Tom, glancing around at the sailor. "We're looking at the Island of the Seven Craters." Junk paused in the act of hitching up his trousers.

"What island?" he asked, in a voice that indicated unusual interest.

"The Island of the Seven Craters. That's what the chief mate called it."

"Let's have a peep," said the sailor, with ill-concealed eagerness. Val handed him the telescope. The sailor took a long and sweeping look at the island.

"That's it, sure enough," he muttered, handing the glass back to Val.

"You've seen it before, I s'pose?" said Tom.

"I reckon I have, my jackies. I was wrecked on it nigh on to ten year ago."

"You were!" exclaimed both boys in a breath, regarding Junk with fresh interest.

"I was."

"What kind of place is it?"

"The most wonderful ye ever seen in yer life."

"It is? Then we must get Professor Scotchley to ask Captain Rynders to anchor there for a few hours and let us go ashore," said Val to Tom.

"You forget, Val, that the captain is dangerously ill and may not recover. The ship is now in charge of the chief mate," replied Tom.

"Then the professor will have to ask Mr. Gotch. It's too bad about the skipper. I hope he'll get well."

"The cap'n won't never git well, mark my words on that, my hearties," said Junk, with a significant shake of his head. "He and Davy Jones'll shake hands afore this time to-morrer."

"What makes you think so?" asked Val, with a startled look.

"I have my idee, that's all. Come with me," and Junk led them aft to the break in the poop, up the short ladder to the top of the cabin and

aft to the rail above the rudder. "Look here and tell me what ye see."

The boys looked and saw the shiny form of a huge man-eating shark lying motionless close to the surface of the water.

"A shark!" exclaimed Val, with a creepy feel-
"A meal."

"Prezactly," nodded Junk. "That there shark has been follerin' us since yesterday afternoon. He scents death aboard this hooker and is waitin'."

"Waiting for what?" asked Val.

"A meal."

"I don't understand you."

"Arter the cap'n's dead, he'll be sewn up in a canvas shroud, weighted with a heavy shot and chucked overboard. That there shark knows that as well as I do. He expects to catch the corpse as it goes down."

Junk's words struck the boys unpleasantly.

"Mr. Gotch ought to get a gun and shoot that shark," said Val, vigorously.

"Humph!" replied Junk. "He wouldn't take the trouble."

"Then I'll go down and get my revolver," said Val, starting for the companion-ladder.

"Only a waste of time, my hearty," ejaculated the sailor, seizing the boy by the arm. "Look over again."

Val looked.

"Why, the shark has gone!"

"Prezactly. He heard you and has sunk out of sight for a while."

The boys looked at Junk, and then at each other, in some wonder. It didn't seem possible that a shark could understand what had been said about shooting him, and yet he certainly had disappeared as if by magic.

"Maybe he's gone for good," said Tom.

"Don't ye believe it. He ain't far away."

"How can you tell that?" asked Val.

"Ye want me to prove it, eh? Wait."

Junk went forward to the galley and presently returned with a chunk of salt beef tied to a piece of wood. He chucked it over the stern so that it fell with a splash. It had hardly hit the water before they heard a rushing sound through the brine, the long, white belly of the shark appeared as it rolled over to give its mouth full swing, then there was a snap and the meat and wood disappeared into the teeth-ribbed opening, and the shark again sank out of sight.

"What did I tell ye? S'pose one of ye had gone over by accident, where would ye be now, eh?" grinned Jack Junk.

The boys shuddered and said nothing.

Soon after the shark incident the sun set below the watery horizon and darkness fell with scarcely any twilight upon the seascape. Hop Hi came to the head of the companion-way and announced that tea was ready. Jack Junk went forward and the boys descended to the cabin, followed by the chief mate, who took the captain's chair at the head of the table. Professor Scotchley was already in his place. The second mate came out of Captain Rynlers' stateroom and reported that the patient was neither better nor worse. He was still unconscious, and had been so almost from the moment he was struck down by the apoplectic stroke. The mate left the door of the stateroom open and took his seat at the table. No one felt like talking except Professor

Scotchley, who bubbled over about his specimens, which rather bored the company. The first thing the boys did on coming on deck again was to look in the direction of the island, now lost in the obscurity, in spite of the brilliant star-lit heavens. They expected to see the glow of the craters, but to their surprise there was not the least glimmer of light in the distance. They hunted Jack Junk up to ask him why there was no fire visible in the top of the craters.

"Nothin' but smoke comes out of them things," answered the sailor.

Then the boys wanted Junk to tell them all he knew about the island and he complied as follows:

"It isn't a bad place to put up at; although there isn't anything to drink there but water. It is said that a vast quantity of pirate loot is buried somewhere on the island too, amounting to millions of dollars' worth."

"Who was it that buried it?" asked Val.

"Vasco the Terrible," answered Junk.

"How do you know all this?"

"Because I met an old chap who belonged to his crew."

"Probably it has been found by this time and sold," said Val.

"The stuff that was planted on this island was never found," said Junk.

By this time the Golden Gate had approached near the island and in a short time the anchor was dropped overboard and the vessel came to a pause. The first mate told Val and Tom that a boat would be sent ashore in the morning and that they could go with it. The boys turned in early that night in expectation of their visit to the isle of the Seven Craters the next day.

CHAPTER II.—The Curtain Falls On Captain Rynlers.

Val awoke with the dawn and punched his chum into wakefulness. They tumbled out on deck just as the sun was beginning to tint the blue water with purple and gold. The Island of the Seven Craters, a mass of green and luxuriant vegetation, like an emerald on a glass setting, lay broad on the vessel's starboard bow, less than half a mile away.

Three of the seven peaks were throwing off a dark smoke, which rose straight up into the morning air. The ship, though not anchored, was perfectly motionless, not a breath of wind ruffling her sails as they hung limply from her yards.

The sailors, who had just finished washing down the deck under the direction of the second mate, were now gathered around the galley, where Hop Hi was pouring out coffee into their tin cups.

"Gee! That's a fine looking island, all right," said Tom, as the two boys gazed on the truly wonderful picture presented to their eyes.

The seven conical elevations rose clear and well defined out of the tropical verdure which covered the entire base of the island. Here and there were abrupt precipices, crags of rocks frowning down like olden battlements, peaks shattered into strange forms, and deep ravines, down which could be seen streams of water falling headlong, glittering in the sunshine like silver lines upon

a block of jet, or spreading, like a sheet of glass, over bare rocks.

The rough, yet romantic scene, was mellowed down by the softer features of rich vales, coconut groves, clumps of dark chestnuts, stately palms and breadfruit, patches of graceful bananas, mingling in great luxuriance and forming with the wild reef scenery of the shore, and far-stretching ocean beyond and around, pictures of surprising beauty.

Jack Junk saw the boys admiring the island and approached them with a grin.

"What d'ye think of it, my hearties?" he said.

"It's a dandy," replied Val, enthusiastically. "A fellow has got to get away from home to see such sights as this."

"We'll go ashore after breakfast," said Tom, "and make a day of it for I don't believe there'll be any wind before sunset, if then."

"You can't tell nothin' about that," responded Junk. "I've seen jest sich a mornin' as this, in this here latitude, wind up in a snortin' gale that nearly took the ship's masts out of her, and set her to leakin' like an old sieve."

"I'd like to bet there won't be any storm around here today. I never saw a finer morning, did you, Val?"

"No. I don't think I have; but it will be blazing hot by and by."

"What do we care after we get over yonder into the shade of those groves?"

"It's lucky we have the island to take refuge on," said Val. "I hope the vessel remains here till a breeze springs up."

"That's a funny remark," laughed Val. "How is she going to get away without wind? Is the anchor down, Jack?"

The sailor shook his head.

"There hain't no need of an anchor jest now. The hooker is out of the current. She'll lie here all day if the calm holds."

"Then I hope the calm holds till night, at any rate," said Tom, thinking of the fine time he and Val expected to have on the island.

"You haven't said nothin' to the professor or the mate about that there pirate gold, have yer?" asked Jack Junk.

"Not a word," replied Tom.

"That's right. We'll look for it together."

"Have you any idea where to look?" asked Val, with some eagerness.

The sailor shut one eye and assumed a wise air.

"Mebbe I have, and then ag'in mebbe I haven't," he answered, slyly.

His manner, however, indicated a whole lot, and greatly excited the boys.

"Suppose we found it, how would we divide?" asked Tom.

"One-half to me and the other half 'tween you two."

"If it amounted to much how would we be able to get it aboard the ship without attracting attention to it?" asked Val.

"You leave that there matter to me," returned the sailor.

At that moment Mr. Gotch, the first mate, came up the companion-stairs, facing the wheel, and walked to the break of the poop. He was followed by the second mate, who, to the eyes of the boys, looked unusually solemn. Val, Tom and Jack Junk were standing at the starboard bulwark in the waist, and they looked up as the chief mate

called the men aft. Evidently there was something in the wind. In a few words Mr. Gotch announced that Captain Rynders was dead, and that he had assumed command of the ship. His communication was received in solemn silence. There wasn't a jack tar aboard but regretted the loss of the man most of them had sailed under for a number of years.

This was Mr. Gotch's first trip on the ship, and so far he had not made himself popular. After saving all he had to communicate to the crew he dismissed them, and the men broke up into groups and retired toward the forecabin.

"Say, Tom, this is tough," said Val. "Captain Rynders was a fine man, all right, and it's a blamed pity he had to die away out here in the South Pacific."

"That's right. I suppose he'll be buried on the island. That's much better than dumping him overboard as would have been done if we were out of sight of land."

"The new skipper may not go to the trouble of sendin' him ashore for plantin'," said the sailor.

"Why not?" asked Val. "It would be an outrage not to do it when we're alongside of the island."

Junk shrugged his shoulders as if it was a matter of indifference to him how the late captain's body was disposed of.

"Captain Rynders has a wife and family in Frisco, and they would probably want to have his body brought to California. This couldn't be done if he was sunk in the ocean; but it might be managed if he was buried on the island," said Val.

"Things has got to go as the new skipper says," replied Junk.

"Well, we'll get Professor Scotchley to remonstrate with him if he orders the captain's body to be thrown overboard."

The sailor grinned, but made no answer.

Since the announcement of Captain Rynders' death, a pall seemed to hang over the ship, and the boys felt as if half the pleasure of their expected day's outing on the island was already spoiled. Jack Junk walked away, and they talked together in low tones until the Chinese cook told them breakfast was on the table. Mr. Gotch, the second mate and Professor Scotchley were already seated at the table when the boys entered the cabin and took their places. The meal was eaten in silence, even the professor having nothing to say, which was unusual for him. At the conclusion of it the new captain sent for the sailmaker and told him to have Captain Rynders' body sewn up in canvas and otherwise prepared for immediate burial, which was compulsory owing to the heat of that latitude.

"Aren't you going to bury Captain Rynders on the island?" said Val, with some indignation in his tone.

"No," replied the new commander, shortly.

"Why not?" demanded the boy.

Mr. Gotch bashed an ugly look at him.

"Mind your own business, young man," he said, sharply, "and I'll attend to mine."

"But you've no right to throw him overboard when you can just as well bury him ashore," remonstrated Val. "Common decency——"

Mr. Gotch's face grew red with passion.

"I am master of this ship, and I want no criti-

cism from you, you young monkey. Do you understand?"

Val, who was a plucky boy, was about to make an angry retort when Professor Scotchley interfered.

"Val, you have no right to question Mr. Gotch's arrangements," he said. "He is the captain of the ship now, and is responsible for his own actions."

Val subsided, but he met the new captain's look with one of defiance which only widened the breach between them. Val and Tom were not the only ones who objected to the late captain being interred in the ocean. When the sailmaker had received his orders, and went forward to get a suitable piece of canvas to make a shroud of, the news spread among the crew. The men held a consultation, the result of which was a committee of the rough tars waited on Mr. Gotch with the request that the captain's body might be turned over to them for burial on the island.

The spokesman received an insulting refusal, and the committee retired to report the unsuccessful result of their mission. A feeling of resentment and discontent spread through the crew, which was noticed by the second mate and reported to his new commander. Mr. Gotch went on the poop at once and called the crew aft.

"Look here, my lads," he said, in a threatening way, "I'm a man of few words, as mayhaps you have already learned since we've been together. I'm the captain of this ship and what I say goes every time. If any man jack of you objects to the way I attend to business I'll clap him in irons and keep him in the hold till we reach Sydney, where I'll turn him over to the authorities for punishment. I want you all to understand that I'll stand no nonsense. If you mean to behave yourselves well to me," I'll treat you fair and square. If you don't why then," he looked around upon the men with a black expression, and punctuated his speech with an imprecation that made the boys' blood run cold, "I'll give you a dose of discipline that'll make you wish you had never been born. That's all I've got to say. Now, go for'ard."

The crew dispersed rather sullenly. They didn't fancy the way the new skipper inaugurated his authority over them, and his attitude looked ominous for the future. Still they recognized the fact that they couldn't help themselves. They must grin and bear it or take the consequences, for the maritime law was all on the side of the captain of the ship.

It was different with Val and Tom. The captain had no right to ride rough-shod over them. At the same time they forgot that even as passengers they were subject to his authority, and he had the power to make things very unpleasant for them without much danger of being called to account for his conduct.

Mr. Gotch walked up and down the poop under the awning in very bad humor. Ever and anon he cast a menacing glance at Valentine Vance, who was standing by the rail looking at the island and talking to Tom. The words the lad had spoken to him at the breakfast table rankled in his breast and he was trying to think how he could get square with him. While he was turning the matter over in his mind the sailmaker reported that he had finished his job. All that remained to be done was to carry the body out

into the waist, place it on a plank, tie a heavy bar of pig iron to its feet, and let it slide overboard into its watery grave. Mr. Gotch walked to the end of the poop, intending to summon the hands to witness the burial of Captain Rynders, when his sharp eye noticed a peculiar haze advancing along the horizon. He turned on his heel, descended to the cabin and looked at the barometer. He saw indications there of a sudden change in the weather. When he returned to the poop there was a malicious grin on his countenance. He gave orders to get the long boat in readiness for lowering. Then he called Val over to where he stood.

"Since you seem to take a great interest in the disposal of the late captain's body, young man," he said, fixing an evil look on the lad, "I've decided to let you have your way. You and your friend, and one sailor to row the boat, shall take the corpse ashore and bury it where you please. Then I hope you'll be satisfied."

"Do you mean that, Mr. Gotch?" asked Val, in a tone of surprise.

"I do. Look yonder and you will see that I have given orders for the lowering of the long boat. The body of the captain will be put aboard of her immediately and the rest will be up to you."

"I accept the responsibility. Professor Scotchley will go with us to read the service for the dead over the grave, and I believe we already have your permission to remain on shore while the calm lasts."

The new captain glanced again at the distant haze and nodded.

Val notified Tom and the professor of the change in Mr. Gotch's arrangements, and asked them to get ready to make the trip with him. Tom expressed his satisfaction that the late captain had escaped a watery grave, and willingly consented to help bury him on the island. The boys went to their stateroom, little thinking that it was for the last time. They strapped belts around their waists containing a revolver and a bowie knife.

Tom also took his rifle and a belt of loaded cartridges. The professor provided himself with a pair of fieldglasses, a bag for carrying specimens, and a hooped net attached to a long pole for capturing butterflies if he ran across any. They heard a cheer on deck as the crew expressed their satisfaction when the mate called them aft and said that Captain Rynders was to be buried on the island. When they walked out on deck they saw four of the sailors bearing the body to the boat, while the others stood uncovered out of respect to the deceased. The canvas-shrouded corpse was raverently placed in the boat, the boys and the professor stepped in, followed by Jack Junk. In the bottom of the boat lay two shovels.

"Cast off, my hearty," said Junk, who was in the bows, to Val, who sat in the stern.

The boy unhooked the tackle at his end, while the sailor attended to his. Junk then picked up the oars and began to row toward the island, while Mr. Gotch, the second mate, Hop Hi and the sailors watched the boat speed shoreward.

CHAPTER III.—On the Island of the Seven Craters.

The line of the shore toward which the boat was making was broken up into numerous small

coves. The boat was headed for the largest of these coves. It was only a short trip from the ship, and presently the bow of the boat grated on the sand.

Jack Junk stepped out and tied the painter to a tropical tree which was growing close to the water's edge. Professor Scotchley got out next. While the sailor took hold of the feet of the corpse the boys lifted the head and shoulders, and in this manner the remains of the late skipper was removed to the beach and then carried up to the edge of the thick vegetation beyond. The boys then returned for the shovels, and the party entered the tropical foliage to find a suitable spot to dig a grave. They had not far to go before they came upon a romantic-looking glade which Val decided would be just the place to inter Captain Rynders.

The weather by this time was decidedly sultry, and the exertion of digging a hole in the earth brought the perspiration out in great drops on the boys' bodies. When the job was finished they were glad to sit down and cool off while Junk and the professor went back to the beach to bring up the captain's body. The corpse was dropped feet first into the hole, and lowered backward with the aid of a rope under the shoulders. The rope was withdrawn and then Professor Scotchley read the funeral service from the late skipper's own book, after which the earth was filled in and a mound raised over the top.

"We ought to have brought a board for a headstone," said Val, when all was over.

"Maybe we'll get the chance to do that before sunset," said Tom. "We can paint his name and other particulars, except his age, which we don't know, upon it."

"Well, let's take a look around the island now," suggested Val. "It's uninhabited, isn't it, Jack?" he added, turning to the sailor.

"I didn't see nobody on it when I was here before," replied Junk, with a grin.

"Whereabouts were you wrecked?"

"On the northern shore."

"And which shore is this?"

"The southwest."

"You weren't the only one wrecked here, were you?"

"No. There were six of us. There's a big reef around that end of the island. Our hooker was driven slap on to it in a howlin' gale, and we swum across the sheltered inlet and saved our bacon."

Professor Scotchley was surprised to learn that Junk had been wrecked on that island once upon a time. He asked for some of the particulars, and the sailor told quite a story of the wreck of the bark he was in at the time, their life on the island, where they remained several months, and finally their rescue by a British ship that put in for water.

While he was telling his yarn they had been walking through the thick tropical vegetation that surrounded them on every side. The story was interrupted several times while the professor chased and captured several butterflies that were new to him, and which would greatly enrich his already large collection of the same species. The boys kept on the alert for something to shoot at, but saw nothing larger than small birds of brilliant plumage, which they hadn't the heart to attempt to slaughter.

"Were you ever at this end of the island before, Jack?"

"No."

"Whereabouts do you think that treasure is?" continued the boy, in a low tone.

"Somewhere around the north end."

"That's rather indefinite."

"Well, I don't know prezactly. I only have an idee."

"What gave you the idea?"

"What that chap said to me the time I met him in Peru."

"What did he say about the location of the pirate hoard?"

"He said it was hidden in the foot of one of the crater hills."

"At the north end?"

"That's the way I understood him."

"Why didn't you get more definite directions?"

"He couldn't give 'em himself, or he wouldn't. Besides, I never expected to see this here island anyway."

"Then we'll have to examine the three craters that appear to be at the north end. That will take some time. I'm afraid we'll never be able to do it and get back to the ship before sundown."

"What's the difference if we don't get back?" said Junk, as if he felt assured there was no need of hurry on their part. "The hooker won't run off and leave us here. You've paid yer passage to Sydney and back, and the new skipper has got to carry ye there and then return ye to Frisco."

"But if a favorable wind should come up Mr. Gotch would be as mad as a hornet if we were not on board."

The sailor grinned.

"He's a tartar, and there'll be somethin' doin' before the v'yage is over, or my name isn't Jack Junk."

They reached a banana grove, and the delicious fruit tempted their palates. The wide spreading leaves also afforded shade, and they were glad to sit down and take it easy for a while, for they were perspiring as if in a Turkish bath. While they were eating and resting Val suddenly noticed the peculiar appearance of the sun, now almost over their heads. He called the attention of Jack Junk to it. The sailor uttered an exclamation and sprang to his feet.

"There's a gale comin', and it's goin' to be a snorter."

CHAPTER IV.—The Storm Subsides.

"I reckon this here storm will give us time to hunt for that there treasure," said Jack Junk. "The old hooker won't be back here for a couple of days, and mabbe we kin find out somethin' by that time."

"But you must have done some hunting for it when you were here ten years ago," said Val. "And you had four or five months to do it in. If you didn't make any discoveries in all that time how do you expect we will succeed any better in the short space of two days?"

"We kin try, can't we?" replied the sailor, doggedly.

"Sure, we can try, but I'm afraid that's all it will amount to."

"Besides, the hooker may not git back in two days, or four days, either," said Jack.

"But somebody will have to watch for her."

"The perffessor kin do that."

"We can't expect Professor Scotchley to remain alone at the south side of the island while we're knocking around at the opposite end a mile away," said Val.

"We kin arrange it some way, I reckon," persisted the sailor.

"After all, there may be no treasure on this island," put in Tom.

"Yes, there is," replied Jack Junk, with a positive nod.

"You couldn't swear to it."

"Yes, I kin swear to it."

"How can you when you've only the word of that chap you met in Peru?"

"He knew what he was talkin' about. The Spanish Government believed Vasco's gold was here, for they sent two expeditions to search for it."

"And you're sure they didn't find it?"

"Not a nickel's worth."

"Didn't other people search for it, too?"

"Yes. More'n a dozen has been after it at odd times."

"How do you know but one of them found and carried it off?" said Tom.

Jack didn't know, but he didn't believe they had.

"If all these persons made a systematic search for the treasure and failed to locate it, I don't see where we come in."

Tom's arguments were all good, but Junk wouldn't listen to them with any patience, because they didn't fall in with his views. He had the idea firmly imbedded in his head that Vasco's treasure was still on the island, and no amount of argument would shake his faith in that fact. He and the boys talked about the pirate gold until the latter, at any rate, were tired of the subject.

As the storm still went on as bad as ever, they philosophically cut supper out of the programme, and lying down on the sandy floor of the cave tried to forget the seriousness of their situation. When night came on a couple of hours later, the blackness of the sky only got denser, and the gale continued to rage with full force.

The boys fell asleep after a while and did not awaken until morning broke. By that time the gale had spent its force, and had already much abated. But it was not a bright, glorious morning like the preceding one. The sky was still dark, and the clouds were chasing each other wildly. There was neither sun nor blue sky to be seen. It still rained, but only at intervals, and the earth was soft and spongy.

"The storm is nearly over, isn't it, Val?" asked Tom.

"It looks pretty dark outside, but I guess it's clearing up all right."

"Where's Professor Scotchley?"

"He's snoozing away over in the corner."

"And Jack Junk—where is he?"

"I don't see him. Gone out to investigate the weather, perhaps."

Val stepped outside and presently caught sight of the sailor coming from the banana grove with a big bunch of the luscious fruit over his shoulder.

"Here he comes with our breakfast," said Val.

Tom was by his companion's side in a minute.

"Breakfast is what I'm looking for," he said,

eagerly. "I'm hungry enough to eat anything in the shape of food."

"I'm in the same boat. I don't know when I have gone solong without having a meal. A nice, juicy steak, some fried potatoes and coffee would go fine now," said Val.

"Oh, lor', don't talk about such delicacies, you make my mouth water."

"Here ye are, my hearties," said Jack Junk, throwing down the bunch of fruit. "Help yourself. There's plenty more where they come from."

"What about the weather, Jack?" asked Val, with his mouth full of banana.

"Clearin'. The sun'll be out before long."

"That's good news. I'm sick of being cooped up in this cave."

Professor Scotchley now woke up and came forward to get his share of the fruit. He made inquiries about the weather, too, and asked Jack when he thought the ship would be back. The sailor couldn't say when she would be back. To tell the truth, he hoped she might not return for a week. The boys wanted to go back to the cove where they landed to make sure that the Golden Gate hadn't been driven ashore and wrecked on the island. Professor Scotchley was also interested in the matter, so, after all hands had satisfied their hunger, they took up their line of march for the shore under the lead of the sailor. They found the little cove, the day before so beautiful, was now a mass of foaming and tumultuous waves, and the surf was thrown for many yards upon the beach. The horizon was confused—they could not distinguish the line between the water and the sky, and the whole shore of the island, as far as they could see, was lined with a white foam.

There was no sign of wreckage anywhere, which would have been the case had the ship gone on the rocks, so the conclusion was that she had been blown away from the island, and they might hope to see her later on.

CHAPTER V.—Ruby Foster.

"Well, what's the programme now?" asked Tom, after they had satisfied their curiosity with respect to the shore.

"What do you say, Jack?" asked Val.

"Well, my hearties, I'm for crusin' over to the north end of the island."

No objection being offered to this suggestion, the party started in that direction. The walking was soft, as might be expected after the drenching the island had received, but did not greatly impede their progress. They were treated to a continuous shower-bath, however, from the foliage through which they passed, and were pretty damp after they had walked a quarter of a mile.

Then they came out into a wide open space, thickly carpeted with a brilliantly green vegetation. They could see the seven crater peaks very plainly now, and the smoke issuing from three of them. They formed a sort of cordon around the island, with wide breaks between them, the centre of the island being practically a luxuriant valley. The island was about a mile long and perhaps a half a mile at its widest point. It was now about nine o'clock, and the sun was strug-

gling for an opening between the flying, slate colored clouds that covered the heavens.

The air was fairly cool for that latitude, and afforded the party great relief after the sweltering they had got from the calm.

"I wouldn't mind living here for a while if I had all I wanted to eat," said Tom. "Nothing like feeling the solid ground under you, after all."

"I should like it, too, provided I had something to occupy my mind."

"We've got the pirate gold to interest us."

"I have very little confidence in that."

"Don't you believe it's here?"

"It may be here, but if so it's hidden too securely for us to find it. After all those expeditions failed to locate it there is small chance for us to hit on it."

"Well, we can amuse ourselves searching for it, at any rate," replied Tom.

They were now approaching the shore of the northeastern part of the island. Val was carrying Tom's rifle, and the two boys were in the lead. Suddenly the entire party were startled by the shrill scream of a woman.

"My gracious!" exclaimed Val. "A woman on the island, and in trouble!"

The words were hardly out of his mouth before a second scream rang out.

"Come on, Tom. We must see what's in the wind," cried Val, starting off in the direction of the sound.

A third scream added energy to the boys' footsteps, and they pushed their way through the tropical verdure as fast as they could.

It sounded quite near, and was mingled with the coarse and threatening ejaculations of a man. At length Val, who was in the lead, emerged from the edge of the grove into a clear space that led down to the sea. A few yards before him he saw a lovely young girl struggling in the arms of a bewhiskered man, who was dressed like the mate of a vessel. The girl was pretty strong and put up a good fight, but when Val reached the scene her strength was giving out, and she uttered another piercing scream.

"Scream away, my pretty bird," laughed the man, maliciously. "I mean to have a kiss—ay, a dozen of them—in spite of your resistance. You're in my power and might as well yield first as last."

"Hold on there, you rascal!" cried Val, bringing his gun down from his shoulder. "What are you about?"

Val's unexpected appearance on the scene so astonished the man that he mechanically released his grasp of the girl, who at once took advantage of her opportunity and broke entirely away from him.

"Save me! Save me!" she cried, rushing wildly toward the boy.

"Sure, I'll save you, miss," said Val. "I won't let him harm you, you may be sure."

The man recovered himself, stared in an ugly way at the boy, and then with an imprecation drew a revolver from his pocket and started to advance upon Val.

"Stop!" cried the boy, in a tone that showed he meant business. "Drop that revolver or I'll fire at you."

As Val covered the fellow with his rifle the girl fell exhausted at his feet. At the same time Tom made his appearance from the grove. The ras-

cal, perceiving that the odds were against him, came to a halt, but nevertheless held on to his weapon in a dogged way.

"Drop that gun or I'll drop you!" said Val resolutely.

Tom, seeing the state of affairs, concluded to chip in, too.

"Throw that revolver down!" he said, drawing his own weapon.

The man hesitated, while his eyes flashed fire.

"Who are you and where did you come from?" he asked in an ugly tone.

"No matter who we are nor where we come from," retorted Val. "We are going to protect this young lady from you. I'll ask you once more to drop your weapon. If you don't you'll take the consequences."

With another imprecation the rascal threw his weapon down.

"Go and take possession of it, Tom," said Val, "and see that he doesn't get away, while I find out what the trouble is."

After Tom had taken charge of the man's pistol and then advised him to remain quietly where he was, Val lowered his gun and turned to the girl.

"Don't be frightened, miss," he said. "My friend and I will protect you from further harm. Will you tell me who you are, and how you come to be on this island?"

"My name is Ruby Foster," sobbed the girl. "My father's vessel was wrecked on this island two weeks ago. Everybody was lost except my father, that man, who was the mate, and myself. My father's leg was broken and he is unable to get around. He is in a cave near here. That man, whose name is Edward Fox, has been annoying me with his attentions ever since we've been on the island. I was going to a place where we get water when he came up behind me, grabbed me and tried to kiss me. I screamed, though I thought there was no one to help me. I don't know what I should have done if you hadn't saved me from him. I am very grateful to you for doing so."

"You're welcome. I am glad I got here in time to be of service to you. That man shan't bother you any more while we remain on the island, and when our vessel returns to take us off we'll take you and your father with us."

"Did your vessel go away and leave you and that other boy here?"

The girl regarded him in some surprise as she spoke.

"I'll tell you how it was," explained Val. "Our ship, the Golden Gate, bound from San Francisco to Sydney, was becalmed off this island yesterday morning. The captain died during the night and four of us brought the body ashore to bury it. While we were here the storm came up and blew the vessel off somewhere, but of course she'll be back after us inside of a couple of days. That's the whole story in a few words."

"I am so glad there is a chance for us to get away from this place. Father will be very glad to hear it, too. You must come with me, both of you, and I'll make you acquainted with my father. He'll be glad to see you, for I am his only companion, as Mr. Fox has little to say to him."

"We'll come in a few minutes, as soon as Professor Scotchley and Jack Junk come up. Let that man go, Tom," he added to his companion.

"What was the name of your father's vessel, Miss Foster, where was she from, and where bound?"

"She was a brig named the Lady of the Lake. We were bound to San Francisco from Sydney with a cargo of coal. We went ashore here in a gale during the night. We had a crew of eight men with a cook, a carpenter and two mates. Mr. Fox was the chief mate. All the others were lost, either washed overboard when the brig struck, or in trying to swim for the shore."

When the girl finished her brief story Val told the girl his name and introduced Tom. At that juncture Professor Scotchley and Jack Junk appeared. The mate, Fox, had walked away and was out of sight, but they were greatly astonished to see Val and Tom in company with a young girl whose age was apparently between sixteen and seventeen. Val introduced Ruby Foster to the professor, and hastened to explain matters. The party then, under the girl's guidance, started for the cave where her father lay helpless from his broken limb, which he had received the night of the wreck.

CHAPTER VI.—Val and Tom Make Themselves Generally Useful.

The cave into which Ruby Foster introduced Val and the others, while not exactly facing the sea, was close to it. It penetrated the base of one of the crater cones from which no smoke arose. It was really a series of caverns, as Val and Tom afterward discovered. The outer one was the largest, and there, on a bed of soft vegetable fiber, lay Captain Foster, Ruby's father. The cave was filled with a lot of stuff that had come ashore from a wreck of the brig—boxes, and kegs, and rope, and a miscellaneous collection of other things, many of them very useful to the three castaways. Captain Foster was astonished when his daughter introduced four strangers into the cave. He immediately jumped to the conclusion that some vessel had anchored off the island, probably in quest of water, which abounded on the place.

"Father," said Ruby, "this is Valentine Vance."

"Glad to meet you, young man," replied the captain cheerfully, extending his mahogany-hued hand.

The girl then introduced the others in the party.

"I presume you are from a vessel that put in here for water?" said Captain Foster.

"No, sir. We were marooned here by yesterday's gale," replied Val.

"Marooned here by yesterday's gale?" exclaimed Captain Foster in surprise. "I don't quite comprehend your meaning, young man."

Then Val told him how they came to be on the island. He went into more details than he had told the girl, and Captain Foster and his daughter soon understood the situation thoroughly.

"I hope you will remain here with us until your vessel returns," said the captain, in a hospitable manner. "We will be very glad of your society."

Val, who acted as spokesman for his party, told Captain Foster that they would be very glad to accept his invitation, as they had no place to go, and that it would be ever so much better for the whole party to hang together.

"You may consider that your stay on the island

will be short, as the Golden Gate will undoubtedly be back shortly to take us off. Of course you'll have to return to Sydney, but that cannot well be avoided."

"It will make little difference to us, since the brig is lost," replied the bluff skipper. "We will manage to get back to the United States by steamer. My vessel and cargo were fully insured, so that my loss will not be very considerable. She was an old craft, and I have been thinking of disposing of her and buying a more serviceable vessel, or retiring from active service altogether."

"It was fortunate that you and your daughter escaped with your lives," said Val.

"It was, indeed, and we feel very grateful to Heaven. With the exception of my chief mate, Mr. Fox, every other soul was lost. Where is Mr. Fox, Ruby?"

"Don't ask me, father. I don't know where he is, and I don't care if I never see him again," she replied, with some indignation in her tones.

"Why, what do you mean, Ruby?" asked Captain Foster in surprise.

The girl then explained the indignity which the chief mate had subjected her to, and how Val and his friend Tom had saved her from his undesirable familiarity. The captain expressed his disapprobation of his mate's ungentlemanly actions, and said he would certainly call him to account for it when he saw him again. He thanked Val for his plucky interposition in his daughter's behalf, and said he would not forget it. Val and Tom then walked outside with Ruby, leaving Professor Scotchley and Jack Junk with the injured captain of the Lady of the Lake. Ruby seemed delighted with the companionship of two boys about her own age, and she was especially taken with Val, not only because he had taken her part when she was in serious trouble, but because he was a good-looking and manly young fellow. Val was equally struck with her. She was an uncommonly pretty girl, with sapphire-blue eyes, and fluffy golden hair. Her naturally fair complexion was browned by exposure to the sun and winds of the ocean, and the ruddy hue of perfect health glowed on her cheeks. She was very vivacious, and not in the least degree bashful.

The three were soon on the best of terms. Before they were an hour together the boys had told her all about themselves, and she had been equally confidential with them. Her mother was dead, and the modest home in the Western Addition of San Francisco, where she had been born, was rented during the absence of herself and father on their long voyage. This was the second voyage she had made with her father, and its unfortunate termination tempted her to believe that it would be the last if she could persuade her parent to give up the sea for good. Val told her how this island had once been the rendezvous of the Spanish pirate, Vasco the Terrible, and that it was believed by many people that his treasure of pillaged gold and other valuables was still secreted somewhere on the place, probably in one of the unknown caves of the seven craters.

"Jack Junk, the sailor with us, was wrecked here like yourself ten years ago. He hunted for that gold during the months of his enforced residence, but he did not succeed in getting even a clue to it. He wants us to help him make nother search, and we're going to do it, if for no other

purpose than to pass away the time while we're here," said Val.

"There is another cave behind the one in which we have taken refuge," said Ruby. "I looked in at the opening one day, but it was so dark and forbidding that I didn't dare think of exploring it."

"We'll take a look at it," said Val. "What do you say, Tom?"

"Sure. I'm with you."

"You will have to have a light of some kind," said the girl. "There may be holes in it into which you might tumble and go down ever so deep."

"We'll make some kind of torches," said Val.

"You can do that easily," she answered. "A barrel of tar came ashore from the brig which papa expected to use for signaling the first vessel that bore in sight. By smearing the ends of a couple of pieces of wood in the stuff and applying a light to the tar you will have excellent torches, though they will give off a lot of strong smoke."

"We'll furnish the light, for we have a small supply of matches," said Tom.

"Oh, we have matches, too. We got lots of things from the wreck before she broke up. Mr. Fox swam out to her one day and found one of the boats uninjured. He afterward made several trips back and forth, bringing cooking utensils from the galley and many boxes of canned goods from the pantry, with knives, and forks, and spoons, and dishes, and other things came in very handy for us. If the vessel had held together longer he would have recovered much more from her."

"I suppose you are the cook?" laughed Val.

"Yes, and father says I am a good one. Mamma taught me how to cook and keep house, but this is the only chance I've had to show my skill since we broke up our home after mamma's death."

"I'm afraid you don't have much of anything, except fish, to try your hand on here," said Val.

"Mr. Fox shot a couple of rabbits this morning with his revolver, and I intended to stew one of them for dinner. As we have company, I'm afraid both of them will hardly be enough to go around."

"Are there rabbits on this island?"

"Lots of them. They must have been left here in the past by the crew of some ship."

"Why, we've been looking for something large enough to shoot, and not the ghost of a four-footed animal have we spied," cried Tom.

"You didn't look in the right place for them," laughed the girl.

"They must have seen us coming and laid low till we got by," said Val.

"Well, it's time I began preparations for dinner, I guess," remarked Ruby. "You can help me if you wish."

"All right. Our services are at your command, Miss Ruby," said Val.

"What shall we do first?" asked Tom.

"Do you think you could skin the rabbits?" she asked.

"Don't know," replied Tom. "Never mind it."

"Tom never did anything in the culinary line in his life," laughed Val. "His folks have three servants, including the cook."

"I'm willing to learn," said Tom.

Ruby got a couple of knives, and taking the boys where the rabbits were hung to the limb of

a tree, she took one down and showed the boys how to take the furry jacket off the animal. They each grabbed a knife and proceeded to imitate her instructions. While they were thus engaged she started a fire in a hole in the ground which the mate had prepared for the purpose, and then got the pot to stew the rabbits in after they had been cleaned and cut up. Ruby, with the assistance of her two helpers, turned out a first-class meal. Besides the stewed rabbits, there were rich yams, breadfruit and bananas, with canned tongue and two kinds of canned vegetables. The liquids consisted of cool water and cocoanut milk. At the conclusion of this banquet, as the boys called it, Captain Foster produced a bottle of prime whisky and treated Professor Scotchley and Jack Junk. This part of the programme suited the sailor so well that he helped him self to several extra nips on the sly, and finally walked off with the bottle while the captain was talking with the professor, and betaking himself to the concealment of the tropical vegetation, proceeded to get gloriously full all by himself. Mr. Fox did not turn up during the meal, and so Ruby set his dinner aside for him.

"Now," said Val, after he and Tom had helped wash the dishes, "suppose we make those torches and explore the inner cave?"

"That suits me," replied Tom.

"You'll come with us, won't you, Miss Ruby?"

She said she would, and so the boys hunted around for suitable material to make the torches out of.

CHAPTER VII.—What Val Found in the Sea Chest.

When everything was ready for the exploration of the inner cave, the boys lighted the torches and the three walked to the opening at the end of the outer cave. Val went in advance, followed by Ruby, while Tom brought up at the end of the procession. Vance held his torch above his head to light the way and avoid tumbling into any pitfall that might be in his path. The second cave proved to be only a small one, with a perfectly solid floor. There was an opening at the further end of it, and when Val entered it he found himself in a narrow winding passage with no roof that he could see.

"I wonder where this will take us to?" he remarked over his shoulder to Ruby.

The girl hadn't the least idea. The passage was not a long one, and ended in another cave. Here they found plenty of evidence that the cavern had once been occupied. There were three sea chests of an old-fashioned kind standing against the walls. In the center of the place was a long, rude table surrounded by half a dozen kegs which had evidently been used as seats. They proved on examination to be empty. There were a number of metal goblets on the table that Tom declared looked to be made of silver. In one corner were several old cutlasses and a single-barreled pistol with an ornamented wooden stock.

"Hello, here's a silver coin," said Tom, picking the piece of money up.

It proved to be a Spanish piece about the size and weight of an American silver dollar.

"By Georgel!" cried Val, in some excitement. "Looks as if we had struck the old pirate's headquarters."

"That's what it does," replied Tom. "Maybe we'll find a clue to the treasure here."

A closer examination of the cups showed they were not silver, but some base metal that looked like it. The chests contained a few pieces of faded clothing, but nothing of the least value. Val turned one of them over to look at the metal knobs that studded it. He happened to press one of the brass protuberances pretty hard and instantly a shallow drawer flew out half way.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, "this chest has a false bottom!"

Looking into the drawer he saw a folded sheet of thick vellum. Pulling it out, he unfolded it and examined it by the torchlight. It was covered with writing, all of it in Spanish, which Val couldn't decipher. Tom and Ruby looked over Val's shoulder as he scanned the characters on the vellum.

"What do you suppose it's all about?" asked Tom.

"How should I know? It's a foreign lingo to me. I can't understand a single word of it. It's just like so much Greek."

"Professor Scotchley will translate it. It looks like Spanish to me. He can read half a dozen languages."

"It might have some reference to the location of the hidden treasure," said Val. "It must be of importance to be concealed in a secret drawer."

"Wouldn't it be great if it was?"

"It would be fine."

"That would let Jack Junk out of it. You found the paper, and if it should show where the treasure is you would be entitled to the biggest part of it."

"What do you take me for—a hog?" protested Val. "We'd divide up even."

"Nonsense! Only us three and the professor would be entitled to a share of it. If I had anything to say you'd have half, because you discovered the document."

"What's the use of talking, or counting our chickens before they're hatched? It may refer to something entirely foreign to the pirate gold."

"I move we return to the front cave and get Professor Scotchley to read it right away," said Tom.

"Oh, there's no rush. The treasure won't run away if this paper has anything to do with it. Let's examine the other chests and see if there are any more secret drawers."

They did so, but the other two chests did not seem to have false bottoms. They looked the cave over thoroughly, but there was nothing else of interest, so they returned by the way they came. Mr. Fox had showed up and was eating his meal by himself. The captain had given him a laying-out, and he was in a sulky humor. He took no notice of Ruby or the boys, and presently got up, lit his pipe and walked away down to the shore. Tom called the professor outside and showed him the paper.

"Can you read that, Professor Scotchley?" he asked, while Val and Ruby gathered around in eager anticipation.

The professor looked at the writing.

"Easily," he replied. "It is Spanish. Where did you find it?"

"Val discovered it in a secret compartment of an old chest we found in one of the inner caves."

They waited impatiently for him to run over it.

"What is it about?" asked Tom, at length.

"It seems to be directions how to find a secret cavern."

"Does it say anything about a treasure?"

"Not a word about such a thing. I will translate it for you," said Professor Scotchley.

Whereupon he read the paper off as follows:

"Cavern in base of extinct crater, northwest of island. Entrance sealed by revolving block of stone working on a pivot. Impossible to distinguish from face of rock. Find button in center of circle facing entrance. Press and stone will revolve on its axis, showing cavern beyond."

That was all, but it was enough to excite the attention of the boys and Ruby as well. To their minds it could mean but one thing—a cavern so artfully concealed must be the resting place of the pirate's treasure. It would not have been so carefully constructed except for a powerful reason, and that reason could only be to hide the treasure acquired by Vasco and his lawless associates, through pillage and murder.

"Write that all out in English, will you, Professor Scotchley?" asked Tom eagerly.

The professor smiled and did so, using a lead pencil and the reverse side of the vellum.

"That must be a strange cavern," he said. "I hardly wonder that you are interested in it. If you will get the bearings of this particular crater, from Mr. Junk or Captain Foster, we will go over there and examine it."

"I'll see the captain at once about it," said Val, putting the paper in his pocket.

He rushed into the cave for that purpose, but to his disappointment found Captain Foster asleep, and he did not think he ought to disturb him, so he returned outside and told the others that the matter would have to be postponed.

"Postpone nothing," replied Tom, who was hot on the treasure trail, "where's Jack Junk?"

Professor Scotchley said that Jack Junk had left the cave soon after dinner, and he had not seen him since.

"I'll bet he's looking around after that treasure himself," said Tom, in some disgust.

"What is this treasure you're speaking about?" asked the professor.

"Tell him, Val," said Tom.

Accordingly Val told Professor Scotchley all they had learned from Junk about the ill-gotten plunder of the pirate, Vasco the Terrible, who haunted these seas about eighty years or so before. The professor was very much interested in the subject. He agreed with the young people that in the light of the buccaneer's notorious career, the expeditions that had been made to the island in search of the supposed treasure, and lastly the document which Val had found referring to a carefully concealed cavern on the island, there was some reason to believe that the clue given in Spanish on the vellum, and for so many years hidden in the false bottom of the chest, might refer to the place where the treasure in question was situated.

"That's exactly our opinion, Professor Scotchley," said Tom. "I'll bet nine dollars to a doughnut that if we can find that cavern we'll find the gold and other things hidden in it."

Ruby clapped her hands at the prospect of finding the treasure. She had read many stories about hidden pirate treasure, and the idea that she might be connected with the finding of one delighted her immensely.

"I suggest that we start to look for that cavern right away," went on Tom.

"We must get the bearings first," said Val.

"We can get our own bearings."

"How?"

"This is the northern end of the island, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Well, west is over there. You can see the sun is setting in that direction."

"That's right."

"Now I'm facing north, and my left arm is pointing west. Half way between is northwest. There are two smokeless craters over there. The cavern should be in the base of one of them."

"That's all right; but if the entrance is impossible to distinguish from the face of the rock, we'll have a nice time locating it."

"We don't have to try and locate the entrance, it's the circle with the button in the center of it we must look for. That faces the entrance according to the paper. Find the circle, press the button and the mechanism will do the rest."

"If that circle was put there seventy or eighty years ago it may be all washed away by this time. Think how it rained yesterday afternoon, and such rains are of frequent occurrence in this latitude. Say it rains thirty times a year. Multiply thirty by eighty. What effect would 250 such rains as that have on any mark on the ground? The markings would likely be washed out long ago," said Val.

"Not if they were put there to stay. The circle was probably not marked with a brush, but chipped out of the solid rock. It would take the rain of several centuries to wear the rock down smooth so that the circle would be obliterated. Don't you think so, Professor Scotchley?" asked Tom.

"That would depend on how deep the circle was indented in the rock," replied the professor.

"Well, as we've got nothing else to do, I vote we all go over to those craters and take a look for the circle. We'll have time enough before dark to tackle one of them, and if we find nothing in the way of a circle we can transfer our investigations to the other tomorrow," said Tom.

"I'm ready to go," said Val. "Are you with us, Miss Ruby?"

"Of course I am," she replied, taking him by the arm.

Tom and the professor went in advance, while Val and Ruby followed, and in this order they shortly arrived at the base of one of the craters.

CHAPTER VIII.—Searching for the Secret Cavern.

"I suppose we must start from this point and walk around this crater, examining the ground close to it as we go," said Val.

"That's the idea," replied Tom.

"Then all I've got to say is that we've got a pretty contract on our hands. The ground is all broken up yonder. I doubt very much if we'll be able to get around."

"It's a wonder the chap who wrote that direction on the paper didn't state on which side of the crater the circle was to be found. That would have saved us a lot of trouble."

"He didn't write it for our benefit," laughed Val. "Apparently he didn't care to make the matter too clear."

"What was the use of writing the direction down, anyway, if he left the most important particular out?"

"I'm not good at guessing conundrums. Give me something easier."

"Well, there's nothing gained by standing here and wasting time jawing. Let us get down to business. I'm going to see if I can circle this crater," and Tom started off to make good his words.

The professor followed, and Val and Ruby brought up the rear as before. When they came to the broken ground progress became difficult. Finally their way was blocked by a series of gullies and chasms that were quite impassable.

"We can't go any further in this direction," said Tom. "We must return. There is nothing doing in the circle line any way in this direction."

So they went back to the starting point and started around in the opposite direction. After going a short distance they met with difficulties again. There were rocks to get around or climb, and all sorts of obstructions that made an investigation tedious and rather discouraging. Then they came to a ravine through which a rapid stream ran down to the sea.

"I don't believe there's any secret cavern in this crater," said Tom.

"It might be on the other side of the ravine," replied Val.

"We can't get to the other side, from the looks of things."

"Not from this point, but by going down to the beach and wading the stream we could climb up on the other side—the one facing the ocean. I should think that would be just the spot where the pirates would put their stuff, provided there is a cavern there. It was nearer to their vessel, or to boats from their vessel," said Val. "You and I could go and investigate while Professor Scotchley and Miss Ruby remain here till we get back."

"Well, come on," said Tom.

"Why can't I go, too?" pouted Ruby. "I don't mind climbing over the rocks."

"I think you'd better stay here with the professor," answered Val.

Tom thought so, also. The fact was, the boys didn't want to be bothered looking after the girl, and helping her over the hard places. The sun was going down fast, and they didn't have any too much time to finish the job of getting around that particular crater. So they started off together and found trouble enough in getting down to the shore. They took off their shoes and waded the stream and then climbed up the ocean side of the crater. They had all their trouble for nothing, for the general character of the crater showed no indications of a cavern in this quarter. When the boys got back to the professor and

Ruby it was high time for them to return to the north shore and the cave where Captain Foster was. They hadn't more than reached the place when darkness fell with its customary suddenness in that latitude. Ruby cooked a pot of coffee over the fire that Val made for her, and this, with crackers and fruit, formed their evening repast. Jack Junk wasn't present, and the boys wondered where he had gone.

"It's a wonder he wouldn't turn up for his supper," said Val.

"That's his funeral, not ours," replied Tom.

When it came time to turn in the boys found a soft and retired spot in the tropical underbrush near the cave and were soon asleep. The missing sailor wasn't very far from them, sleeping off his jag. He turned up in time for breakfast next morning, looking rather seedy.

"Where have you been keeping yourself, Jack?" asked Val.

"Takin' a long snooze, my hearty," replied the sailor, and that was all the explanation they could get out of him.

"He looks as if he had been on a bust," chuckled Val to Tom.

"He does that, but the few drinks Captain Foster treated him to wouldn't have that effect on him," replied Tom.

"He may have found one of those tropical trees the sap of which makes an intoxicating drink."

"He must have struck something that gave him a jag, for he doesn't seem to be thoroughly sober now."

"Maybe he got away with a bottle of the captain's whisky on the quiet."

"I guess you've hit it. He probably noticed where Ruby got the bottle her father treated with, and he went there and found another."

"Or sneaked with the bottle the captain used."

Immediately after breakfast Tom proposed to resume their search for the secret cavern. Val and the professor were ready to join him, but Ruby couldn't leave her father, so they started without her. They hadn't got very far before Jack Junk joined them, and though the boys weren't particularly delighted to have him along they couldn't shake him. They made straight for the second of the two craters in the northwestern end of the island.

"Are ye huntin' for that there treasure, my hearties?" asked Jack suspiciously.

"That's what we're doing," replied Val. "I've got a clue to it."

"Ye have, eh? Where did ye get it?"

"Oh, I got it where you never would have found it."

"Do ye mean to say ye have an idee where it's to be found?"

"That's about the size of it; but it doesn't follow that we'll find it, just the same. It's in a sealed-up cavern."

"How do ye know it is?"

"I found that out."

"How did ye find it out?" persisted Junk.

"What difference does that make to you, Jack, as long as you get some of the stuff if we come across it?"

"Some of the stuff! I'm entitled to half of it."

"I don't see that you're entitled to any of it, as you haven't done anything to help find it."

"I told ye that the treasure was here, didn't I?"

"Yes; but that amounts to nothing unless it can be found."

"I told ye that it was in the north end of the island, didn't I?"

"Well, you were wrong. It isn't in the north end."

"What end is it in, then?"

"The northwest end."

"That's all the same."

"Not by a long chalk. But, even admitting that it is, you don't know the first thing about finding the cavern where it's hidden. You hunted for weeks for it when you were here before, and what good did it do you? There is only one way to reach that treasure and Tom, I and the professor know that way."

"So ye've told the professor, have ye?"

"We had to take him into our confidence."

"Why didn't ye?"

"Because the clue is in Spanish, and he's the only one who could read it."

"What is this here clue ye are talkin' about?" Jack asked curiously.

"It's a paper I found."

"Where did ye find it?"

"In an old sea chest that belonged to one of the pirates."

"Where did ye find the chest?"

"In one of the cavern back of the cave occupied by Captain Foster."

"I seen them chests ten year ago when I was here, but there wasn't nothin' in 'em. I kin swear to that," replied the sailor positively.

"Did you examine them?"

"Sure, I did."

"You didn't examine them carefully enough. One of them is fitted with false bottom. There's a shallow drawer in it. The paper was in that drawer."

"Where is that there paper?"

"Can you read Spanish?"

"Sure, I kin read it."

Val took the sheet of vellum out of his pocket and held it up for the sailor to look at.

"Read it, then."

Jack Junk tried to, but could only make out a few words. Many of the words were faded, and it was so badly written that it was a poser for the sailor. Professor Scotchley, being an expert linguist, and well educated in all kinds of handwriting, had experienced no trouble in deciphering the paper.

"Can you understand t?" asked Val.

Jack Junk had to admit reluctantly that he couldn't read it.

"Well, the professor read it without any trouble."

"What does it say?" asked the sailor eagerly.

"It says nothing about the treasure at all, but it mentions a sealed cavern in one of those two craters we're approaching, and how to get into it. I've got a notion that if we can find that cavern we'll find the treasure there."

"How much do I get if ye do find the stuff?" asked Junk, willing to arbitrate the matter now.

"You'll get some of it, and if there's much there you'll have more money than you ever owned in your life before."

"I want enough to have a good time on till I turn up my toes, d'ye understand?"

"You'll get that much, all right, if you don't spend your share all at once."

"Don't ye worry about me spendin' it all at once," growled the sailor.

"The best thing you can do is not to think about it till you get it. We are not sure of finding the cave."

"Don't the paper say where it is?"

"Only in a general way. It is simply a clue. We've got to hunt for it."

"I'll help ye hunt."

"You can do that when we reach the crater."

It was a brilliant morning, the heat of the sun being tempered by a cool breeze from the sea. There was little or no surf now around the shore, the ocean having subsided after the gale into a level and glistening expanse of water. The party caught frequent glimpses of it as they walked along. At last they reached the crater they were aiming for, and without delay started in to look for the circle mentioned in the sheet of vellum.

CHAPTER IX.—Discovery of the Secret Cavern.

They first directed their course toward the sea, looking carefully along the ground which, however, was thickly covered with vegetation. After going a hundred yards without result, their further progress was barred by a precipitous break in the ground. Here the crater, as far as they could see around it, descended in a sheer perpendicular wall into the ocean.

"Stuck again!" said Tom, rather disgusted with the outlook. "If we don't hit the circle in the other direction I'll begin to think that paper don't amount to a whole lot after all."

"They reversed their course."

"I'm afraid that the circle is covered up by the vegetation which has likely overgrown it in the eighty years since it was made," said Val.

"That's a very reasonable supposition," said Professor Scotchley.

"We'll have to clear the vegetation away, then," said Tom.

"How long do you suppose it would take us to cut the stuff down? Months. Besides, the circle, if made at all, must have been made on a slab of rock, and I don't see how anything could grow on a rock."

"It could grow all around the rock and hide it, couldn't it?" said Tom.

"It could do that easily enough in time, if the rock wasn't too big."

"The rains could wash enough earth over the slab to hide it, and form a bed for vegetation to grow in," said Professor Scotchley. "All that could happen inside of eighty years."

"I guess we're up against a hard proposition," said Tom, as they walked slowly along, looking in front and to the right and left as they proceeded.

"Hard or not, we'll stick it out as long as circumstances permit us to. The object to be gained is well worth any amount of exertion," said Val.

They were now ascending to a higher plane up the side of the crater, and they gradually obtained a more extended view of the island. A quarter of a mile away, jutting out into the ocean, was the first of the three smoking craters. The second was at a right angle on the other shore of the island, while the third was about a mile away, at the south end.

"Where are we going?" asked Tom at length, pausing to fan himself with his hat. "Up to the top of this cone?"

"Looks like it," replied Val.

"Then we're on the wrong track. The paper said the cavern was at the base of the crater, and the base of anything is usually the bottom, or the spot on which it stands."

"The base in this case may mean the foot of the wall at any particular spot."

"It may mean a whole lot, but I don't believe it does, just the same."

"We'll keep on, anyway, and see where we come out at."

"Oh, all right," replied Tom. "I don't care; but I've money to bet that we don't—"

Val suddenly made a dart forward several paces and then looked down at the ground.

"Hurrah!" he shouted excitedly. "Here's the circle."

His ejaculation brought the rest of the party up in short order. They all gathered about him and looked down where he pointed. Sure enough, there was an immense circle, divided into ten segments, cut in a slab of solid stone. The circle and the lines of the segments were filled up with dirt and covered with vegetation. A circular spot in the center was also covered with green turf. Anybody not looking for a circle would hardly suspect that the circle was anything more than an odd arrangement of Nature, which often does curious things. Val knelt down close to the center piece and began pulling the growth away. This accomplished, he scooped the earth out of the hole into which it had taken lodgment. He was looking for the button which, according to the paper, controlled the mechanism that opened and closed the entrance to the cavern in the crater. At length he had removed the last of the earth.

There lay a small protuberance in the very center of the hole. The boy placed his thumb upon it and, with beating heart, bore down on it. As Val pressed the knob in the basin-like hole a remarkable change took place in the apparently solid surface of the rock. A ponderous stone, working on an axis, swung downward into a horizontal position, revealing a room beyond. All hands gazed on the opening with wonder and astonishment, then Professor Scotchley broke the charm by an exhibition of boyish delight. He uttered a shout and a hop and swung his hat in the air. Tom threw one arm up and gave a loud hurrah. Jack Junk, who was in the rear, gazed in bewildered astonishment. Val, being down on his hands and knees, had a better view of the interior than the others. He saw some boxes piled near the entrance, several of them actually overflowing with what appeared to be gold coin.

"Hurrah!" he shouted gleefully, springing to his feet. "There's the treasure. I can see money to burn! We'll all be millionaires!"

He made a dash to enter the cavern, closely followed by Tom. In a moment both had passed under the poised slab and were gazing spellbound at the heaps of coin on the tops of the boxes. Professor Scotchley and Jack Junk followed them, and the eyes of the latter took on an avaricious gleam as his gaze rested on the heaps of money.

"Gracious!" exclaimed Tom. "These boxes are fairly overflowing with yellow boys. It makes my mouth water to look at them."

Val thrust his hand into one of the money piles

and took up a fistful. The coins were all about the size of an American quarter and uncommonly bright. Professor Scotchley leaned forward and took several of the coins out of Val's hands. A curious smile wreathed his countenance as he examined and weighted them.

"This is not gold," he said. "It's brass."

"Brass!" gasped Val and Tom in a breath.

"Exactly—brass. And they're not regular coins, either. They are private tokens of an old South American diamond mining firm, once used for barter and exchange among the employees only. I've seen samples of these coins before. In fact, I have several in my coin collection at home. They are practically worthless now, and are no longer used for the purpose for which they were cast."

A closer look at the money convinced the two boys that Professor Scotchley had only spoken the truth, and their expectations of having become millionaires sank down to zero, while Jack Junk gazed at the bright money in stupid bewilderment.

"And these iron-bound boxes are all full of the dern stuff," said Tom in great disgust.

He dug his hand down into one pile of coin, but it met with a hard obstruction. Sweeping the brass stuff away, he found he had struck the top of the box.

"These coins are only piled on the outside of this box," he said.

The boys found the same fact true with respect to the other two boxes. The coins were merely heaped on top of them to give them the appearance of being full to overflowing.

"That's what I call a low-down, deceptive trick," said Tom wrathfully. "Do you suppose those pirates did that to fool anybody who found this cavern by accident?"

"Give it up," replied Val gloomily, for all his golden visions had been ruthlessly shattered.

"How do you suppose those pirates got hold of this brass rot?" asked Tom of Professor Scotchley.

"The coin was probably manufactured in Europe for the diamond company, and the pirates no doubt captured the vessel that was bringing it to Rio de Janeiro, which was the headquarters of the diamond mining company, about that mine. That is the only reasonable way I can see that they could have got possession of so much of it."

"Do you suppose all these kegs and boxes are full of the blamed stuff?"

Val lifted one of the boxes.

"It's pretty heavy," he said. "And doesn't look as if it had ever been opened. All the boxes are of one size and are certainly filled with something, but I feel sure that it isn't the treasure we're after."

Tom was certain of that fact, too. He laid hold of one of the kegs and found it weighty also.

"Maybe they're full of gunpowder," he said.

"Some kind of liquor," suggested Val, giving one of them a kick.

At the mention of the word "liquor" Jack Junk smacked his lips in a greedy way, for next to a keg of gold, a keg full of whisky or brandy struck a long-felt want in his breast.

"If the pirates had any treasure it must be here somewhere," said Tom. "Let's look around."

Val at that moment spied a heavy brass-bound sea-chest in a corner.

"What's this?" he said, going over to it.

He tried to lift it, but it was as solid as a rock.

"Maybe some of the pirate treasure is in this," he said. "It's heavy enough to be filled with gold."

The four gathered around the chest and looked at it critically. Suddenly Val stooped down and picked up three Spanish doubloons that lay alongside of the chest. They were silver pieces as big as an American dollar. The discovery of the doubloons raised the hopes of the boys once more. Tom lit a match, looked behind the chest and found two more of the same kind of coin.

"I'll bet this is one of the treasure chests," he said, with fresh excitement. "Look, how strongly clamped the thing is! Why, it would take a sledge-hammer to burst it open!"

The general opinion of all hands was that the chest contained something of value, and the boys were eager to get it open. That, however, was an impossibility without tools. Tom suggested tackling it with heavy stones, but Val objected to that method as being impracticable.

"There is a hatchet and some carpenter's tools at the cave," he said. "We'd better return there now, and this afternoon we'll come back here with the implements most available for the purpose and go through this chest, and also investigate the contents of the boxes and kegs. It's the most sensible course we can pursue, don't you think so, Professor Scotchley?"

The professor agreed with him. Tom also thought it was a good plan, and said so. While the boys were talking Jack Junk was casting an avaricious eye on the supposed treasure chest, and mentally calculating how much of its contents ought to come to him. The attitude of the boys didn't please him a little bit. As matters looked to him they apparently intended to claim the lion's share of whatever treasure was found, and hand him over what they thought fit, which he judged would be a very small part. He was of the opinion that he ought to have half of the pirate's plunder. The boys never would have thought about Vasco's treasure but for him. To be cut off with a small share wasn't a square deal in his opinion. The sight of the heavy iron-bound sea-chest, which he felt assured contained the treasure he had been thinking about off and on for a matter of thirty years, excited a strong feeling of cupidity in his breast, and an equally strong feeling of resentment against anyone who would try to deprive him of what he considered rightfully his property. The longer he considered the matter the uglier he grew on the subject, until some pretty bad thoughts began to take possession of his brain.

"Come on, let's get back," said Val, at length, walking out of the cavern.

The rest of the party followed, the sailor reluctantly.

"Now to close the entrance," said Val, going to the hole in the center of the circle where the knob was. "I wonder how the revers action works?"

As the party gathered around him Jack Junk watched the boy's movements with sharp attention, as he wanted to learn how to operate the mechanism himself.

"I pressed down on it before, which caused the stone to revolve," said Val. "I suppose I ought to pull on it now to make it turn back into its place again."

He suited the action to the word. All heard the sharp click that followed somewhere about the entrance. Then the ponderous stone revolved backward and sealed up the opening without making a sound, so nicely adjusted it was.

"The man who executed that job was an artist," said Val. "I don't see how such a contrivance could have been built away out here on an island in the middle of the South Pacific."

"The fact speaks for itself," replied Tom, "and there's no cause for us to worry about how it was done. There were expert mechanics eighty years ago as well as today. Press the button and let's see if it works all right again."

Val pressed the knob, and the stone opened as noiselessly and easily as before. Then he closed it again.

"It is probably worked by a series of thin steel arms under the slab," said Professor Scotchley, who was much interested in the mechanical contrivance.

"I don't see why the pirates went to all this trouble when they could have buried the stuff somewhere down along the seashore and it would have been just as safe," said Val.

"I should imagine that one of their number, being of a mechanical turn of mind, suggested this scheme as an improvement on the customary burying process," replied the professor. "Its very novelty no doubt caught the fancy of his comrades and they acted on it under his directions. At any rate, the fact remains that the idea was carried out, and in the most clever manner. After the knob in the hole was covered up with earth, no one not in the secret of its existence would ever discover it except by accident. Just why the big circle was cut into segments, however, is not very clear to me, for it looks like a useless proceeding."

After some further talk on the subject the party started back for the cave by the sea, full of golden visions of the future.

CHAPTER X.—Trapped in the Cavern.

The boys found Ruby impatiently awaiting their return.

"Well," she asked expectantly, "did you make any discovery?"

"We did," replied Val. "We found the circle and the secret cave."

"Did you, really?"

"Ask Tom."

"That's right; we found it," said Tom.

"What about the pirate's treasure?"

"That's a conundrum at present," he replied.

"Didn't you find anything in the cavern?" she asked in surprise.

"Oh, yes. We found a lot of boxes and kegs, and a heavy iron-clamped sea-chest. If the treasure is there it is in that chest, most likely."

"Didn't you examine the chest?"

"No. It had too solid a lock for us to get a peep inside. We're going back after dinner with the hatchet, and any other suitable tools we can find, and open it somehow so as to find out just what it contains."

"I'm going with you," she said, in a tone which

indicated that she didn't mean to be left out in the cold.

"All right. I'll see that you don't get into trouble," laughed Val.

"You're very kind," she replied, making him a mock courtesy.

Val then told her about how they had been deceived by piles of brass private money, which they had first taken for gold coin. She laughed heartily over the matter, and said she hoped the next money they found would be the real thing.

"Val, let's go and take a bath in the inlet before dinner," said Tom.

"I'm with you," replied Val. "What's your bill-of-fare today, Miss Ruby?"

"Potted meat, canned tongue, breadfruit, canned corn, bananas, yams, and cocoanut milk."

"That's a fine lay-out for the shipwrecked and marooned inhabitants of this island. Almost as good as hotel fare," said Tom. "I am beginning to feel hungry already."

"We'll have fried fish for supper if somebody would be kind enough to catch a few," said the girl.

"Got any fishing tackle?" asked Val.

"Oh, yes. You boys might look for some shellfish while you're in bathing. You'll find lots among the outer rocks of the reef."

"I suppose we must make ourselves useful in order to earn our grub," said Val.

"You won't have to do it long, for I suppose your vessel will be back by tomorrow," she replied.

"I wish she wouldn't turn up for a week or two," said Tom. "I'm just beginning to enjoy myself here."

"Well, run along and take your bath. I shall expect you back to dinner inside of an hour."

The boys walked over to a cove a quarter of a mile away, undressed and plunged into the waters of the inlet. The inlet was a narrow arm of the ocean protected by a lone line of reef.

"I'll race you over to the reef, Tom," said Val.

"What's the stake?"

"Oh, I'll give you anything from a nickel to half a dollar."

"Make it a quarter. I don't want to rob you of all your change," grinned Tom.

"A quarter it is. Are you ready?"

"Sure."

"One, two, three—go!"

The race began at once, and Val won by a length.

"You're an easy proposition," laughed Val, as he climbed on the outer line of rocks.

"You didn't beat me so much that you need crow over it," growled Tom.

"It's like finding money to swim you for a wager. Aren't you sorry you bet?"

"No, I ain't sorry, smart aleck. I'll bet you another quarter I'll beat you back to the beach."

"You're a dead game sport, aren't you?" chuckled Val. "Come, now, you want to get busy and look for some shellfish. We'll carry them back in this net I fetched along."

They had no difficulty in finding all the shellfish they wanted, and with a net full they swam leisurely back, dressed, and returned to the cave, where they found dinner waiting for them. After the meal Val announced that they would return to the crater.

"Will you carry the hatchet, Jack?" he asked the sailor.

"No. I'm not goin' over ag'in today, my hearty," growled Junk, throwing himself down under the shade of a species of palm tree.

The boys were surprised at Jack's apparent want of interest in the treasure, but were just as well pleased to leave him behind. They wouldn't have been quite so satisfied if they knew what was passing in the sailor's mind. Captain Foster asked Tom to lend his rifle to Mr. Fox to go rabbit hunting with while they were away, and the boy consented. The party proceeded in much the same order as during the preceding afternoon, Ruby showing a decided preference for Val's society. In due time they reached the crater and ascended to the place where the circle was. They had not the least idea that their footsteps were dogged by Jack Junk, who had followed them far enough behind to escape observation.

Ruby uttered an exclamation of astonishment when Val pushed the knob in the hole and the heavy slab swung out on its axis, disclosing the cavern with its barrels and boxes beyond. As they all disappeared inside of the opening, Jack Junk slouched cautiously up the incline. A wicked plan had taken possession of his brain. If it worked all right he figured that the whole of the pirates' treasure, which he believed to be in the sea-chest, would be his. How he could carry that treasure away from the island after he got possession of it in the manner he was calculating on did not bother him just then. While he was slowly making his way toward the mouth of the cavern Val and Tom were figuring whether they should commence operations on the sea-chest or on one of the boxes. Finally they decided to begin with one of the boxes, and Val, with the hatchet and a large-sized chisel, started to pry the cover off.

"Suppose we all take a guess as to what the box contains before the cover comes off?" said Tom with a grin.

"I'll bet it doesn't contain any of the pirates' treasure," said Val.

"I'll wager it's full of those brass tokens," said Tom.

"I couldn't guess, for I haven't the least idea what's in it," said Ruby.

"What do you think is in that box, Professor Scotchley?" asked Tom.

"I think it's a case of spirits," he answered.

"What makes you think so?"

"That trade-mark burned in the wood. All the boxes have it."

After some difficulty Val succeeded in removing the cover. The professor's guess was the correct one. The box contained a dozen sealed stone jugs labeled "Schiedam Schnapps."

"That settles the contents of these boxes," said Val. "They all hold gin."

"How about the kegs?" said Tom.

"I'd like to bet a dollar to a nickel that they contain some kind of spirits, too."

"What do you suppose the pirates brought all that stuff here for?"

"To drink, of course. They always liked to have a howling old time when they were ashore, so they laid in a good stock of the stuff which they must have captured on some vessel which probably carried a cargo of it. These boxes and

barrels contain what they didn't get the chance to consume. It was left for a future carouse which never came off, because the rascals never returned to the island."

"Well, let's tackle the chest, and see if the treasure is in that. It must be somewhere about, if the villains didn't take it away with them."

"If it isn't in this chest then it may be concealed in an inner cavern. There's a hole in the wall yonder which leads somewhere."

All looked in the direction that Val pointed and saw a dark aperture which indicated the way to a passage or cave beyond.

"The reason why I feel almost sure the treasure Jack spoke about must be here is that the pirates would hardly go to the trouble of sealing this cavern up in such an artful manner if they didn't have some powerful reason for doing it," said Val. "If their plunder isn't in this sea-chest it's hidden in another cavern back of this, reached through that opening in the wall."

"Well, see if you can knock the cover off the chest," said Tom.

"What's the matter with you taking the first whack? I opened the case of gin."

"All right. Give me the chisel and hatchet."

"Where are you going to start in?" asked Val.

"Here," said Tom, giving the cover a smart upward crack with the hammer end of the hatchet.

To the astonishment of the boys the lid bounced up several inches and fell back again.

"Why, it isn't locked at all," said Val, seizing the lid and flinging it open.

As Val lit a match all gathered around the sea-chest full of curiosity and anticipation as to the character of its contents. To their great disappointment it proved to contain nothing more valuable than several coils of rope and a number of heavy tackle blocks, together with a lot of other nautical gear of a similar kind.

"Well, if that wouldn't jar you!" cried Tom. "And we thought it was full of gold money and valuable jewels, and other things of that kind."

"Isn't it too disappointing for anything?" said Ruby.

Professor Scotchley, who since the discovery of the brass tokens had begun to entertain very serious doubts as to the presence of any treasure at all in the cavern, stroked his beard and looked wise, like an old owl.

"If Jack was here he'd have a fit over this throw-down," said Val.

The words had hardly left his mouth before the attention of the party was attracted by a sharp click at the opening. They turned just in time to see the huge stone revolve, shutting them prisoners in the cavern.

CHAPTER XI.—The Way to Freedom Blocked.

A moment before the afternoon sun, streaming through the opening, had lighted the cavern fairly well, now the little party was surrounded by an Egyptian darkness. The transformation had been so sudden and unexpected that for a moment or two those imprisoned in the place never stirred nor uttered a sound. Then the spell was broken by Tom exclaiming:

"Great Jewhittaker! The stone got loose some-

how and we're caught in here like rats in a box trap. What are we going to do now?"

"The stone didn't get loose of itself," replied Val coolly.

"It didn't!" ejaculated Tom. "It must have."

"No. Jack Junk has trapped us."

"Jack Junk!" cried Tom in surprise. "Why, he didn't come with us."

"I know he didn't, but he followed us, just the same. He's up to some game."

"How do you know Jack Junk trapped us? And why should he do so?"

"Because the moment I heard the click I recognized the sound and looked at the entrance. I could see right out under the stone as it commenced to revolve. Jack was lying on the ground across the circle with his face turned toward the opening with a look of triumph on his features."

"Is that so?" gasped Tom.

"Yes, it's so."

"What do you suppose his object is?"

"Probably to frighten us into making terms with him. He wants half of the treasure that he thinks is in those kegs and boxes."

"He can have the whole of what's in them, for all I care. There's enough gin there to keep him blazing drunk for a year," said Tom.

"It is evident to me that the fellow is a rascal at heart," said Val. "We have been deceived in him. The idea of him following us up here and then making us prisoners! I'd like to punch his head."

Val took out his match-safe and struck a light.

"We'll soon use up all our matches if we've got to depend on them for illumination," said Tom, as Val struck a second one. "We ought to have torches."

"What's that yonder on the top of that case?" asked Tom, pointing.

Tom went over and laid hold of the article. He uttered a cry of satisfaction.

"It's a lantern," he said, "and there's a candle in it."

The candle was lighted and it glowed as brightly as though it had been in steady use right along, and not out of commission for so many years. Taking the lantern in his hand, Val with Ruby close behind him, led the way through the dark hole at the end of the cavern. They found themselves in a narrow, rocky passage that inclined downward. Val expected that this passage would terminate in another cavern close at hand, but it didn't. Finally he came to a junction with another passage, leading off to the left. Here he stopped and waited for Tom and the professor to come up.

"Stuck?" asked Tom, over Ruby's shoulder.

"No," replied Val. "I am simply up against another passage. I don't know whether we had better follow the one we're on or take the other."

"You might try the new one. Go on a little way yourself and see if it runs far. We'll wait here for you to come back. If you hit another passage on your way come right back for fear that you might get muddled up and lose us."

"Let me go with you, Val," begged Ruby.

"You can come, if you want to," he replied, "though I should think you'd rather remain here with Tom and the professor."

"No, I want to go with you," she insisted.

She was allowed to have her way, and when Val started off along the new passage she tagged

on close behind him. After going down a short distance the passage took a decided up-grade. The floor was comparatively smooth and free of stones or earthly obstacles. Suddenly it took a sharp turn, and Val saw light ahead.

"There's an opening in front of us, Ruby," said Val, dropping the Miss, as she had called him Val. "This may be a back exit from the cavern."

"I hope it is," replied the girl. "I don't like to be shut up underground."

The ascent grew steeper as they proceeded. Then they caught a glimpse of the blue sky and a fleck of sunshine. Val blew out the light in the lantern, for he knew he had to go back through that passage, and he wanted to save the candle. At length they reached the opening and looked out to see whereabouts they were. They found they were about forty feet down the inside of the extinct crater. All around them the wall of rock rose and descended in an inaccessible and precipitous fashion. Not the slightest chance of escape for them lay in that direction.

"We're stuck, Ruby," he said. "We can't get out this way, that's certain."

"Isn't that just too provoking for anything?" she replied, feeling ready to cry from vexation.

"It's rough, that's a fact. Just take a look down into the crater. Doesn't it give you the creeps to imagine where you would go if you tumbled into this yawning hole?"

Ruby looked and then shuddered, while she grabbed Val's arm the tighter.

"Oh, dear, what shall we do now?" asked Ruby.

"There's nothing for us to do but to go back and rejoin Tom and Professor Scotchley."

They started back the way they came, and as Val knew the road was straight and clear he did not relight the lantern. When he thought he was drawing close to where Tom and the professor were awaiting their return he shouted out, "Halloa, Tom!"

"Halloa, old man!" came back from a short distance ahead.

In another minute the party came together again.

"Well, where did the passage lead to?" asked Tom.

"You'd never guess," replied Val.

"I'm not going to try. Where did it lead to? The open air?"

"Yes."

"Can we get out?" asked his friend eagerly.

"No. The passage ends right in the crater."

"The dickens it does!"

"It does, about forty feet from the top edge. The interior of the crater is nothing but a sheer wall of precipitous rock, up and down. If we had wings we might stand a show of getting out, otherwise, nit."

"That's rough. Shall we go back and see if Jack Junk has opened the entrance?"

"You can, if you like, and we'll await you here. It's my opinion that he hasn't made any effort to release us."

"Then you want to push on down through this passage on the chance that it may bring us out somewhere?"

"To tell you the truth, Tom, I don't really believe there is a back way out."

"Then why go on?"

"I've a curiosity to see where this leads to. It is possible there is another cavern in this crater where the pirates hid their plunder. It certainly isn't in the sealed cavern. If we don't find such an underground vault I think we may conclude that the pirates got away with their treasures themselves. Or else somebody who got hold of the secret of entering the cavern came here and carted the stuff off without anyone becoming the wiser."

Tom concluded not to return to the sealed cavern, as he judged they would in the end all have to go back together, so the downward line of march was renewed with Val and Ruby in the lead.

CHAPTER XII.—The Wonderful Marine Cavern.

The passage had a clear descending grade, sometimes quite steep in places, but mostly easy to walk along. It wound along somewhat in a serpentine fashion, and was clear of pitfalls or obstructions of any kind. Val was very careful not to advance too rapidly, as well as to flash the lantern continually before him. As Val raised the lantern above his head his hand came into contact with the roof of the passage, which was scarcely more than a foot about their heads at this point, while its width had narrowed to about three feet. The slope also became much steeper, and they had to walk more carefully. Suddenly Val stopped short, and held up the lantern beneath which he peered.

"Do you see anything, Val?" asked Ruby anxiously.

"No, but I hear something."

A dull rushing sound smote upon their ears, but in a muffled, strange way, that puzzled them to make out what it might be.

"Water, isn't it?" spoke up the professor. "The sea breaking in through some hole near here."

"Maybe it is," said Tom; "but it sounds awfully weird to me—just like the deep breathing of some sea monster."

"I'll bet there's a sea cave below us," said Val, after listening intently. "Maybe one of us could get out by swimming. Then he could climb up the shore, return to the spot where the circle is and reopen the entrance for the rest to get out."

"You may be right," said Tom. "Are you going to push ahead and see?"

"I am," returned Val.

He started to advance without his usual caution, and as a consequence met with an unexpected surprise. He stepped into a shallow hole, lost his balance, pitched forward, and came down on all fours with a crash. The lantern was smashed and the candle extinguished, leaving the party in complete darkness. Ruby uttered a scream which echoed and re-echoed through the passage.

"Great Scott! What happened to you, Val?" asked Tom, aghast.

"I stepped unexpectedly into a hollow about a foot deep. For the moment I thought I was going down into a pit. The worst of it is I've busted the lantern."

"That's bad," answered Tom.

"It can't be helped," said Val, lighting a match and hunting among the debris of the shattered lantern for the remains of the candle.

He found and lit it, then he helped Ruby down into the hollow, and pointing it out to Tom and Professor Scotchley, started on again with due caution. As they pressed forward the sound of rushing water became more and more apparent, and evidently close at hand.

"We are getting near the level of the ocean," said Val. "If there's a sea cave down here we ought to reach it inside of a minute or two."

As he spoke Val came to a sharp turn in the passage. Ahead of him he saw a dull, flickering light. This grew brighter as he advanced, until a peculiar radiance filled the passage. It came around another turn straight before them. When Val reached it he saw that the passage terminated in a huge marine cavern. Not only that, but the floor ended with equal abruptness, leaving a drop about ten feet between them and a hard inclined sandy beach. Val gazed in a kind of entranced way at the picture before him, and Ruby, looking over his shoulder, had the same view. What Val and Ruby saw was a large cavern, floored with beautifully smooth, soft sand, and lit up by the same soft gray dawn that had greeted them at the end of the passage, but how this light entered the place they could not make out, for no opening was visible, and the rushing, roaring sound of the water came from the lofty roof.

"What's stopping you, Val?" asked Tom, from behind.

"I've reached the end of the passage," replied his chum. "There's a drop of a dozen feet before me right down into the finest sea cave you ever dreamed of."

"You don't say! That's where the light comes from, eh?" said Tom eagerly.

"I don't know where the light comes from. There isn't any opening to the cave as far as I can see."

"There isn't?" exclaimed Tom, in astonishment. "There must be an opening to let in that light."

"Probably there is, only I can't catch sight of it from here. I'm going to jump down now and then you and Professor Scotchley can get a view of the cave."

Suiting the action to the words, Val sprang down on the sandy floor. Then he turned around and held out his arms to Ruby.

"Jump, and I'll catch you."

She obeyed without hesitation, but gave a little gasp as he caught her in his arms. Tom uttered an exclamation of wonder and pleasure as he came to the opening and saw the dimly lit marine cavern.

"Come on, Tom," said Val impatiently. "We must examine this place and see if we can get out before the sun sets, otherwise we stand a good show of remaining here all night."

That aroused Tom to a sense of the situation, and he jumped down. Professor Scotchley followed.

"Hello!" exclaimed Val. "Look at those chests yonder in the shadow of that rocky spur. Maybe they contain the treasure we're looking for."

He rushed up to the spot where four old-fashioned sailor's chests were ranged in order, par-

tially concealed by a projecting wall of rock that prevented them from being seen except when a person stood in a certain position. Tom followed his chum, and they were looking at the chests when Ruby and Professor Scotchley joined them.

"A dollar to a doughnut this is the pirates' treasure," said Val, in some excitement.

CHAPTER XIII.—The Escape from the Sealed Cavern.

"Those chests were never brought here through that passage," said Tom sagaciously. "It's too narrow for them to pass through. Consequently, it stands to reason that there is another entrance to this cavern. If we want any further evidence of the fact we have it in the wavy light which illuminates this place. The light must come from somewhere. When we find the source of it I'll bet we'll find a way of getting out into the air once more."

Tom pointed up at the side farthest from him where he stood, and a little closer investigation showed that the pale, soft light appeared to be reflected upward against the roof, coming from behind a screen of rock. He and Val crossed to this point and found that they could easily pass around the rocky screen, which reached halfway to the ceiling, and they now stood in a tolerably wide passage lit by a soft, flickering green light, which came through a low arch, and on reaching and passing through this the boys uttered a shout of delight, for before them was another cavern, whose low, flattened roof was glorious with a lovely, ever-changing pattern, formed by the reflection of the sunlight on the waves outside. The inflowing and receding water reached about halfway from the seaward entrance to the cavern, and a line of seaweed which indicated high-water mark. This showed that the tide was retiring, and figuring on the slope of the sandy floor the boys saw that the entrance was submerged at high tide. While they were congratulating each other that the avenue of escape lay before them, they were joined by Ruby and Professor Scotchley. The sight of the sea and the blue sky in the distance delighted the girl beyond measure. It was such a pleasant contrast to the darkness that had surrounded them for the past hour.

"Isn't this cave just too lovely for anything?" cried Ruby, clapping her hands in delight. "Look at those anemones and limpets and coral! See those little pools, too, among the rocks! And doesn't the sea look grand from here?"

The boys and Professor Scotchley agreed with her that the scene before them was both novel and interesting, and worthy of being transferred to the canvas of some celebrated marine painter.

"Well, it's getting late," said Val. "If we're going to escape from this place we want to be getting about it."

"How about those chests in the other cave?" asked Tom, whose thoughts were never far from the wished-for treasure.

"They won't run away, and we can't do anything with them now. We know how to get down here from the sealed cavern above. The hatchet and chisel are up there. Tomorrow we'll fetch them down and see what is inside the chests."

"The only way to get out of this place that I can see is by swimming," said Tom. "That wouldn't be so hard for you and me, but for the professor and Miss Foster——"

"Look here, Tom, only one of us need do the swimming act—me for instance. You, Miss Ruby and the professor must make your way in the dark back to the sealed cavern. The way is straight and easy, and you can't go astray. I'll swim out and around to the nearest landing place along shore. Then I'll walk up the crater to the spot where the circle is and let you all out. That will solve all difficulties."

Ruby didn't like the idea of returning through the long passage in the dark, especially without Val, but she had to agree to the arrangement. So they all returned to the inner cave and the boys assisted Professor Scotchley and Ruby up to the opening of the passage. Val then boosted Tom up and bade them a temporary good-bye. Going back to the outer cavern he stripped and rolled his garments into a small bundle.

Holding them well above his head, he waded out through the entrance into the sea until the water reached his neck, then he struck out with one arm. A short swim brought him to a spot where he obtained a footing on the rocks, and he found he could walk the rest of the way to the beach by using care. After dressing himself he had a roundabout walk before him to strike the crater beyond the break in its seaward face. At length he reached the path leading to the circle and hurried forward, wondering if he should find Jack Junk up there. When he came in sight of the spot where the circle was, there was no sign of the rascally sailor, and the entrance to the cavern was shut.

"I wonder if the villain intended leaving us in there all night?" Val asked himself. "It must be so, or he would be hanging around here. I don't see how he expected to make his terms known to us through that sealed door. I doubt if the human voice would penetrate it. Maybe he discovered that fact and then decided to leave us in there till tomorrow morning, thinking to scare us into coming to such terms as he means to propose. Well, this is where he got left. He's welcome to all the gin and other spirits in there, as well as the contents of the sea-chest. We'll be satisfied with what we find tomorrow in the four chests down in the marine cave."

Thus speaking, Val pressed the knob in the hole and the stone revolved to its horizontal position, affording free entrance and exit to and from the cavern. Val expected to find the rest of the party ready to step out, but there was no one in the cavern, so he threw himself on the grass outside and waited patiently for them to appear. They entered the cavern five minutes later, and Tom gave a shout when he saw the entrance open. As soon as they were outside, Val closed the doorway and they started for the cave on the north shore.

"It will be dark by the time we get there," said Val. "We'll have a late supper tonight."

"You and I will have to jump on Jack's neck for playing us such a measly trick."

"I'll bet he'll be surprised when he sees us. He'll wonder how we escaped from the place."

"Let him wonder. It will do him good."

"We don't want him with us tomorrow. He mustn't learn what's in those chests down in the

marine cavern, for I have a strong idea we shall find treasure in them."

"He'll be sure to follow us if he doesn't come with us."

"Then Professor Scotchley must sit outside the cave and stand watch."

"He couldn't prevent Jack entering the cave and following us down through the passage, as he certainly would do when he saw what we were up to. He'd guess we were hunting for the treasure, and could insist on butting in."

"How are we going to head him off, then?" asked Val.

"You and I must enter the marine cavern by swimming."

"We couldn't do it except at low tide. If the tide rose while we were in there we'd have to remain there some hours in the dark till it receded again."

"That wouldn't hurt us any. We could make some more torches and use them."

"That's right. But I think we ought to build a raft. Then we wouldn't have to swim into the cave. We'll have to do it, anyway, to remove those chests, if they're worth removing."

They continued to canvass the subject till they reached the cave, which they did just at dark. Jack Junk was sitting under a tree talking to Fox, the mate, and when he saw them he nearly had a fit. The boys had decided to say nothing to him for the present, and they started in to assist Ruby prepare supper. After the meal the young people went off by themselves to talk about the treasure they expected to find next day.

It was arranged that Ruby was to ask her father to get the sailor and the mate to go next morning to the cove where the body of Captain Rynders was landed, in order to see if the Golden Gate had got back to the island. That would get Jack out of the way for a time, at least. This plan was duly carried out, and Junk and Mr. Fox were persuaded to start immediately after breakfast. The sailor went rather reluctantly, but he couldn't very well get out of it. After he was gone the boys rummaged the carpenter's chest that Mr. Fox had brought ashore from the brig and picked out an auger and a center-bit.

They also manufactured four torches, and took enough eatables in a canvas bag for their dinner, as they were not sure of getting back until late in the afternoon. Ruby and the professor accompanied them to the sealed cavern.

CHAPTER XIV.—The Gold of the Seven Craters.

On entering the place Ruby was given the hatchet and chisel to carry, and Professor Scotchley was asked to carry a coil of thin rope taken from the sea-chest.

Then they descended to the first of the marine caverns. The tide was up, and they found it dark as pitch. Two torches stuck in the sand furnished all the light they needed for the business in hand. Val began operations on one of the chests with the center-bit, making holes around the lock.

Then he knocked the lock in and threw up the cover of the chest. The first thing that met their eyes was a Spanish merchant flag filling in the entire top of the chest. Val yanked this away

and found the chest filled with silver plate, goblets, and flagons, as well as ornaments and vessels evidently intended for use in a church.

The treasure at last!" cried Val, as they gazed upon the valuable contents of the chest.

"Isn't there any money-bags at the bottom?" asked Tom.

"I can't tell what is at the bottom till we pull this stuff out," replied Val.

Investigation showed that there was no money or jewels in that chest.

"We'll find the money in one of the other chests, then, if the pirates didn't spend it all," said Tom.

A second chest was opened in a similar manner, and it was found filled with bags of gold and silver. The third was filled entirely with gold Spanish and French coin, and the fourth held not only money-bags, but a large collection of expensive watches, chains, and valuable jewelry of every imaginable description.

Professor Scotchley made a rough estimate of the value of everything at about a million dollars. It was decided then and there that Val was entitled to two-fifths of the treasure, and that each of the others should have one-fifth. Then a council was held to decide on the safest way to get the treasure away from the island without attracting attention to its real character. The chief difficulty in the way was Jack Junk, who would be sure to make trouble as soon as he saw the chests.

He would suspect their contents at once, and unless he was bought off he would be likely to give everything away. When they got back to the cave at the north end they expected to hear that the Golden Gate had arrived and was waiting for them, consequently they would have little time to make their final arrangements for leaving the island.

"If we have time I think it would be the best thing to take this treasure out of these chests, since we have destroyed the locks, and nail it up in those boxes in the cavern above after dumping out the gin bottles," said Val.

The others agreed that the boxes would look less suspicious than the chests, and that the treasure would not only be more secure, but easier to handle.

"We'll make the time, old man," said Tom. "You take a chisel and I'll take the hatchet and we'll go up there right away and tackle the job. We'll bring down a couple of boxes first and Miss Foster and Professor Scotchley can pack them while we go back for two more."

Val agreed to that, and they started back through the passage. Tom opened one box and Val another, and after taking the jugs of schnapps out they carried the boxes down to the marine cavern.

"Pack the bags of gold first," suggested Val, "and drop a few watches and rings into the spaces to fill up."

The boys then returned to the upper cavern for two more boxes. By the time they had six boxes down and packed Val said it was time to eat, and so the party left off work for dinner.

It took a dozen of the small boxes to hold all of the treasure, and the covers were nailed back again as before. The four sea-chests were hauled to another part of the cave and the boxes piled in their places ready for transportation.

"That's all we can do today, and it's a mighty satisfactory job," said Val, complacently. "Now we'll get back to our rendezvous."

They all returned to the upper cave, and each taking two jugs of the gin, left the place and walked back to the cave by the seashore. Jack Junk and Mate Fox were back and had reported no ship in sight.

The mate had shot three rabbits and they were waiting to be skinned and cooked. The sailor eyed the gin in a loving way, and Val told him he should have a jug of it after supper. At ten that night he was blazing drunk, and whooping things up along the beach. Next day the boys, accompanied by Ruby and Professor Scotchley, went to the cove to look for the Golden Gate. She was not in the offing, nor was there any sign of a sail during the two hours they hung about the place. Every day after that for two weeks somebody went to the cove, but the trip was a vain one, and then the impression began to prevail that the ship had been lost in the gale. The prospect of getting off the island grew less and less as the days passed, and finally a month elapsed without the appearance of a sail. A second and third month succeeded, and the boys began to wonder how long the party was fated to remain.

Jack Junk was the happiest of the party, apparently, for he had all the gin he wanted, and he seemed to have arrived at the conclusion that there was no treasure on the island after all, especially as Val and Tom ceased to speak about it. One morning, after the party had been six months on the island, they awoke to find a bark anchored in the inlet. The captain and crew of the vessel were surprised to find people on the island. The bark had put in to get a supply of fresh water.

She was bound for San Francisco, and her captain consented to take the shipwrecked and the marooned people on board and carry them to the United States.

Arrangements were also made for transportation of the boxes containing the treasure, which were represented as containing Holland gin.

The kegs of what was found to be prime French brandy, nearly 100 years old, were presented to the captain of the bark in payment for their passage and freight on the cases, and as they were easily worth nearly \$1,000, the skipper made a good thing out of the arrangement.

In due time the bark reached San Francisco and the cases were landed in bond.

Subsequently the professor and Tom's father had their contents appraised.

The money was allowed to enter free of duty, but the watches, ornaments, silver vessels and jewelery were assessed according to the schedule

for such things, and a duty was paid on them, after which they were sold to the best advantage.

Altogether, \$1,500,000 was realized out of the treasure, of which Val received \$600,000, and Professor Scotchley, Tom and Ruby \$300,000 apiece.

Captain Foster was now relieved from any further necessity of following the sea for a living, and he settled down in a new and pretty home for good.

Val and Tom went to the University of California together, and after their graduation went into the office of a prominent lawyer and studied for the bar.

Val was a frequent visitor at Captain Foster's home and soon after his graduation he asked the old skipper for the hand of his daughter Ruby. A year later they were married, and Tom was best man on that occasion.

Tom was married himself a year afterward, and now both boys have splendid homes, close to each other, where Professor Scotchley is an ever welcome visitor, and where they often talk about the Treasure of the Seven Craters.

Next week's issue will contain "A WALL STREET MYSTERY! or, THE BOY WHO BEAT THE SYNDICATE."

MYSTERIOUS "MOODUS NOISES"

Nature's time-worn jest, the "Moodus noises"—subterranean rumblings the source of which never has been discovered—occurred again with such force that buildings shook and dishes and windows rattled.

Residents of the village, nearly as accustomed to the phenomenon as to the change in seasons, had just finished breakfast when came the familiar deep groaning from the earth, accompanied by a slight tremor.

The noise was distinctly heard in Wethersfield, Glastonbury and Rocky Hill. The tremor was first attributed to the explosion of dynamite in the Connecticut River, near Windsor Locks, miles north of this village, but it was discovered later there had been no blasting.

This visit was the second the mysterious force has paid in little more than two weeks, the rumbling being most pronounced in the vicinity of Mount Tom, in this village.

For years geologists have been puzzled by the "Moodus noises." William North Rice, professor emeritus at Wesleyan University, believes that the "noises" are slight earthquakes, accompanied by subterranean earth slips. Others have advanced the theory that there is a cavern in the hills into which air rushes and is expelled by sudden changes in temperature.

HARRY THE HALF-BACK

OR

A FOOTBALLIST FOR FAIR

By GASTON GARNE

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER XV.

Called Home.

The only thing that worried them was the fear that possibly Silkwell might, by some underhand trick, succeed in making it impossible for Winslow to play.

He had been keeping very quiet, however, since the day he had been beaten by Harry in the wrestling match.

It really seemed as though he had been effectually squelched.

Parker and Westley did not trust fully to appearances, however, and they kept up a system of espionage on the student.

Curly Carwell and Jimmy Oppen took turns at shadowing Silkwell, and they kept him under surveillance most of the time.

He was a smart youth, however, and was aware that he was being shadowed, and so he was quite careful. He visited the two thugs in the cave a couple of times, but he managed by clever work to throw the watchers off the track.

Winnie Marshfield became somewhat uneasy as the day of the football match drew near.

She knew Silkwell, and feared that he would make an attempt to do Winslow an injury, or to get him away, so that he could not play football.

She saw Winslow every day now, and had become very well acquainted with him indeed.

The day before that on which the game was to take place she spoke to Winslow seriously and cautioned him to take good care of himself.

"Don't go walking along the lake this evening, Mr. Winslow," she said.

He laughed.

"I won't, Miss Marshfield," was the reply; "I will be careful, for I am eager to play on the team to-morrow."

"And I am eager to have you do so," her eyes shining. "With you on the team, I just know that we shall win."

"Thank you, Miss Marshfield," with a smile, and yet with rather an earnest undertone to his voice; "one thing is sure, if I can bring about a win, I shall do so."

"Well, I am sure that you will bring it about," confidently.

Winslow then and there privately declared that he would win the game, or die trying.

On the evening of the same day, Silkwell and his three cronies were in the former's room drinking wine and talking.

"See here, Percy," said Wilkins, presently, "I thought that you were going to see to it that Winslow did not play on the eleven again."

Silkwell gave the speaker a peculiar look and then said, dryly:

"I believe that he has played only once."

"I know, but to-morrow the game takes place, and he is here, and you have not made any arrangements to keep him from playing—have you?"

The last two words were added because he noted a peculiar, crafty expression come over Silkwell's face.

"Say, fellows, let me tell you something," said Silkwell. "I have five hundred dollars bet on Larchmount with the fellows that won my two hundred the time of the other game."

The three started, and an eager look appeared on the face of each.

"Then you—have you made arrangements to——" exclaimed Small.

"I am not telling anything at all, fellows," said Silkwell. "But, if you want to win some money, bet it on Larchmount."

"Say, do you think that I will be able to play, sure enough?" cried Wilkins.

"I don't know what Parker and Westley will do, but I hope that you may be put on, Wilkins, and if so—well, you know on which side your bread is buttered."

Wilkins nodded.

"I know," he said, "and I have a score to settle with Parker and Westley for shoving me off the team to make room for that fellow Winslow."

The others nodded knowingly. They understood that Wilkins was going to do all he could to throw the game if he got to play on the eleven.

But, much confidence as they had in Silkwell, they did not believe that he would succeed this time in getting Winslow out of the way.

The morning of the day on which the game was to be played came, and all was excitement in the college.

Winslow was on hand, and there seemed to be no possible chance for him to take unto himself wings, figuratively speaking, and fly away.

At half-past nine o'clock, however, there came a telegram for him, and when he opened it he turned pale and gave utterance to a groan.

"What is it, Harry?" cried Denman, who was standing near by.

Winslow handed him the telegram, and Denman read as follows:

"HARRY WINSLOW—Come home at once. Your mother is dying."

"(Signed) WILLIAM WINSLOW."

Denman seized his friend's hand and pressed it sympathetically, at the same time saying:

"It may not be so bad as that, old fellow."

"I'm afraid it is, Walter," was the sober reply. "Father is conservative, and would not have seen me word unless he was sure. I am off to catch the ten-thirty train, old fellow. You tell the boys where and why I have gone."

He dashed away, and Denman at once told Parker and Westley the news. They were in despair. They asked Denman if he thought it possible that Harry might be persuaded to remain until after the game and take the evening train but Denman shook his head and said nothing in the world could keep Harry from his mother's side a minute longer than was absolutely necessary.

"I guess that's right, too," said Westley, gloomily. "A fellow has only one mother, and has any number of chances to play football."

Parker nodded assent to this statement.

"It's too bad. I sympathize with Winslow," he said, "and it is hard luck for us."

The news flew quickly throughout the college, and great was the excitement and terrible the feeling of disappointment because Harry could not be there to play against Larchmount.

Winnie Marshfield met Harry in the hall as he was hastening away with his suitcase in his hand and gave him her hand, and told him how sorry she was, and she spoke hopefully, telling him that possibly his mother might not be so bad as the telegram stated, after all.

"Thank you, Miss Marshfield," said Harry; "I hope so, but I am much afraid that such is not the case. Good-by."

Then he was off; but he felt better for the meeting with Winnie.

* * * * *

The game of football was played, and Julian Wilkins, who was put in to play right halfback, practically lost Wrightmore the game by making at least three bad plays at critical times. Larchmount won by the score of eleven to five, and went home happy, while the Wrightmore players and adherents were correspondingly miserable.

"If Harry Winslow had been here we would have won in a walk," said Jimmy Oppen, disconsolately.

"But he wasn't here, you know," said Percy Silkwell, sneeringly, and there was a malicious smile of satisfaction on his sinister face.

"Can he have had anything to do with—but no!" thought Oppen. "It is impossible. Harry was called home by a telegram from his own father."

About six o'clock Walter Denman got a telegram from Harry Winslow. He was in the library with a score of the students when he received it, and when he had glanced over it he gave a start and exclaimed:

"Listen to this, fellows! It's a telegram from Harry Winslow. Here is what he says:

"WALTER DENMAN—Message about my mother a fake. She is not worse, but is much better than when I left home. Be back to-morrow.

"(Signed) HARRY WINSLOW."

The youths stared at one another in amazement. What did it mean?

Then suddenly into their minds flashed the thought:

"Silkwell's work!"

CHAPTER XVI.

Villainy Temporarily Triumphant.

About the same that Walter Denman was reading the dispatch to the students to the effect that the telegram that had called Harry Winslow home was a fake Percy Silkwell and his three cronies were in the former's room, seated about the green-topped table that had been the scene of many an all-night session at poker.

On the table in front of Percy lay a large bundle of greenbacks.

Silkwell was looking at the money gloatingly, the other three enviously and covetously.

"There it is, fellows," said Silkwell; "five hundred plunks, and all won on the football game."

He took up some of the money and counted out fifty dollars, which he shoved across to Wilkins.

"There, Julian," he said, with a smile, "that is to pay you for playing so well at right halfback."

He emphasized the word "well," and Wilkins grinned and took the money promptly.

"Thanks, Percy," he said; "I wish I could play football every day, at the same price."

"You won that fifty easy by not playing hard," with a laugh.

"Say, Percy," from Eugene Small, "tell us how you managed to get Winslow out of the way—or did luck favor you in that the telegram that his mother was dying come at just the right time, thus saving you the trouble of having to do anything?"

Silkwell smiled triumphantly.

"I was responsible for that telegram being sent," he said.

"But how can that be possible?" queried Thorp. "It was from his home town, and was signed with his father's name."

Silkwell laughed again. He was feeling in a particularly good humor.

"Simple enough," he said; "I paid a certain chap to go there and send the telegram—see?"

"But how did he dare sign Mr. Winslow's name to it?"

"Oh, I paid him well, and he did it, that's all."

"He was taking a big risk."

"Oh, not so very. The town is quite a large one, and the telegraph company did not investigate. Why should it? They supposed that my man came at Mr. Winslow's orders, and that the message was all straight—see?"

The youths did see, and they stared at Silkwell admiringly. They decided that he was certainly a daring fellow, and an exceedingly shrewd one.

"I told you Winslow should not play on the team again," said Silkwell, complacently, "and I generally keep my word. I shall do so in this instance. Harry, the Halfback, as they love to call him, will not play on the team again. Mark my words."

"I hope that he won't," said Wilkins.

"He won't. You will play in the next game, Julian, and if you can manage to do as you did this time, and practically lose the game for Wrightmore, it will be one hundred dollars in your pocket, for I shall bet a thousand dollars on Larchmount next time."

"I'm your man," said Wilkins, his eyes snapping. "One hundred dollars! Phew!"

"I wish I could play football," grinned Small.

"And I," from Thorp.

Silkwell smiled complacently, and got up and brought a bottle of wine and placed it and some glasses on the table.

"We will celebrate," he said.

He poured out three glasses of wine, and then said:

"A toast, fellows."

They raised their glasses on high.

"Here's to the continued success of Percy Silkwell and company, and the demoralization and discomfiture of Harry, the Halfback! Drink it down!"

(To be continued)

CURRENT NEWS

STRANGE NURSERY

In a strange nursery on the banks of the Potomac, the United States Government keeps a host of fleas, mosquitoes, mites and flies. When fully grown, they serve to test poisons that are sold throughout the country for extermination of insects, says Popular Science Monthly.

Among the most valued assistants on the bug farm are four dogs, two cats, and 125 chickens, who produce bumper crops of fleas and mites. To get first hand information on whether advertised mosquito and chigger preparations do all that they should, a human worker in the laboratory daubs the stuff on one arm and spends the afternoon fishing on a chigger-mosquito infested bank.

BURNS SHOES TO GET WARM.

Lacking coal, Louerio Baiardi, cobbler, of 305 East Seventy-first Street, New York, fed old shoes to the small stove at the rear of his shop. The stove exploded at 3 o'clock, severely injuring Baiardi and blowing a large plate glass window out of the store adjacent.

Panic followed among eighteen families living in the five-story tenement above. A passerby turned in a fire alarm, and somebody called an ambulance. The cobbler was taken to Reception Hospital suffering from lacerations and burns.

Fire inspectors discovered a grayish powder that settled on the walls of the shop after the explosion. They said this came from the cement which hold rubber heels to shoes. They recommended that regardless of the coal scarcity all persons resist temptation to use old shoes in their furnaces.

RADIO-PHONOGRAPH DEVICE BRINGS HEARING TO DEAF

Experiments were made in West Hartford, Conn., at the American School for the Deaf with a machine which is a combination of radio and phonograph, with head piece and speaking tube attachments, enabling pupils at the school who never before had heard any sound, to hear not only the voice of the speaker, but their own voices as well.

An eighteen-year-old girl, considered totally deaf since she was four, the first pupil used in the test, heard and spoke her own name for the first time, knowing from signs and lip reading that it was her name.

The problem, according to Principal Frank R. Wheeler, will be to teach the children to identify the sounds they hear with the words they speak and read.

"HUMAN" TYPEWRITER

After working eight years on his invention, Edwin T. Pierson of Denver, Col., has perfected a machine with typewriter keyboard that may be called "almost human," for it translates words into telegraph code, either Morse or Continental, so that anyone who can use a typewriter can send telegrams, though entirely ignorant of telegraphic codes.

The speed with which a message is sent can

be regulated to any desired rate, says Popular Science Monthly. Likewise, if the operator should write unevenly or irregularly on the keyboard, the mechanism of the instrument adjusts it and sends the message perfectly spaced, with exact dots and dashes.

Similar in size and appearance to an ordinary typewriter, it is said to be easier to operate. There is no end line to watch, nor line spacing.

FRANCE REAPS HUGE ANNUAL PROFIT FROM TOBACCO

The tobacco industry in France, Poland and Denmark is a government monopoly, says the Department of Agriculture in discussing the tobacco monopolies of Europe.

In France the government alone has the right to manufacture and sell tobacco, and its cultivation is closely regulated, the report continues. Every person who wishes to cultivate tobacco must receive a government permit. The government not only specifies the number of acres which a grower must cultivate, but also the number of plants an acre. The grower must agree to sow only seeds furnished by the monopoly, to devote the most careful attention to the cultivation of the area intrusted to him for that purpose and to deliver his entire crop to the monopoly at a fixed price, depending on the grade.

The French government realized a net profit of more than \$74,600,000 from the operation of the monopoly during 1921, the latest year for which statistics are available. The production of tobacco in France during 1924 amounted to 53,859,000 pounds, which was supplemented by imports amounting to approximately 58,414,000 pounds.

The Polish state tobacco monopoly was established in 1923, the government buying up all of the seventeen private factories. At the end of 1924 its holdings represented a capital investment of \$5,940,000. The net profit to the government during the first year of the monopoly was \$25,817,000.

The tobacco industry in Denmark is a government monopoly, although producers and dealers have more freedom in the conduct of their business. The Danish government restricts its activities to the control of factories and to the imposition of tobacco taxes and the collection of revenues.

During 1924 approximately 1,159,200,000 cigarettes, or 343 per capita, were consumed in Denmark, one-tenth being of foreign origin. The internal revenue tax collected on foreign and domestic manufactured cigarettes during 1924 amounted to \$1,384,000. The production of smoking tobacco in the government controlled factories amounted to 4,544,000 pounds, which was supplemented by 421,000 pounds imported from abroad. The consumption of smoking tobacco during 1924 amounted to about 1.5 pounds per capita, the total internal revenue tax collected on that product amounting to \$392,000.

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ITEMS OF INTEREST

TWO NORTH RIVER TUBES PLANNED IN NEW JERSEY

Two new tunnels under the North River will be recommended by the North Jersey Transit Commission in its reports to the Legislature Jan. 26, according to an Associated Press despatch yesterday. Proposed locations are 59th Street and South Ferry, with subways on both the New York and New Jersey sides connecting the ends.

The plan to be offered by the commission is the first step of a project for linking every important city in northern New Jersey with New York by rapid transit lines.

Traffic from the South Ferry tunnel would be carried west in electric trains, over the tracks of the Jersey Central, through Newark on the bed of the abandoned Morris Canal to Lackawanna tracks at Roseville. Trains there would be routed to the Oranges and to Bloomfield, Montclair, and Paterson. Six years would be required to construct the tunnels.

SOAP AS A GERMICIDE

Soap has a value as an aid to health even greater and more direct than has hitherto been expected. The ordinary routine of dishwashing and laundering or cleaning the face and hands is fatal to germs of such dangerous diseases as pneumonia, diphtheria, blood poisoning and other serious infections. Dr. John E. Walker of the service laboratory of the Army and Navy General Hospital at Hot Springs, Ark., has concluded extensive experiments which showed that common soaps were effective germicides in at least three types of infections, while soap made with coconut oil was markedly destructive to the organisms of typhoid fever.

The soap is greatest use in hospitals is the "official soft soap." The substitution of coconut oil for the linseed oil used in making this soap renders it germicidal against the typhoid bacilli as well as against the other three organisms. Although this change would make the soap more irritating to the skin, it would be desirable, and it would be especially useful in case of typhoid epidemics.

All the soaps tested were more antiseptic at higher temperature. The organism causing boils, known technically as *Staphylococcus aureus*, completely resisted all soaps, even at a higher temperature, except a sodium resin soap.

Dr. Walker found that when the hands were washed with ordinary care the lather formed contained about 8 per cent. of soap. This amount he said was more than enough to kill the pneumonia, diphtheria and streptococcus bacilli. The most careful washing of hands, however, did not kill the staphylococcus or boil-forming organisms, which showed that soaps alone could not be relied upon for complete surgical sterility.

In spite of claims put forth by manufacturers of special soaps, they were found to be no more effective than the average household kind. Foreign substances mixed with the soap often interfered markedly with the germicidal action.

LAUGHS

He—Why do you call your husband governor?
She—Because he vetoes so many of my bills.

Mrs. Muchblest—I feel uneasy. The baby hasn't cried all day. Mr. Muchblest—So do I. He will probably cry all night.

Clerk—Mr. Sapleigh complains in his letter that he is not hearing anything further about his suit. Lawyer—Send him a bill.

"Why are you so fond of going to church?"
"It's so comforting to see one man keep so many women quiet for a whole hour."

An old ducky was convinced that a bill rendered him by his butcher was not correct. He complained to the butcher who said, "Sam, figures don't lie." "Ah knows dat," said Sam, "but liars do figger."

Bilkins—I never knew Cockshure to acknowledge that he had made a mistake. Pilkins—I did once. Bilkins—How did it happen? Pilkins—He put the lighted end of his cigar in his mouth.

Mrs. Jenks—I haven't heard you speak of Florida this winter. But then your lungs are not weak this year. Mrs. Wise—No, and they're not likely to be unless my husband's business improves.

De Style—What did your rich uncle leave you when he died? Gunbusta—Nothing. De Style—Didn't he say anything to you before he passed away? Gunbusta—Yes, he said nothing was too good for me.

Bejenks—They say it isn't easy to keep a girl in your kitchen nowadays, but I've had the same cook for twenty years. Bijones—That is a great record. How did you manage it? Bjenks—I married her.

"Who is the villain of your production?" asked the hotel clerk. "Well," answered Mr. Stormington Barnes, "the man who plays the villain is named Smith; but the real villain is the manager who got us out here."

STATISTICS OF SESQUICENTENNIAL INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION

Floor Space in Main Buildings

Manufactures and Liberal Arts.....	8½ acres
Agriculture, Food and Dairy Products.....	8½ acres
Machinery, Mines and Metallurgy and Transportation	10½ acres
Stadium	5 acres
Auditorium	3 acres
Administration	¼ acre
Total	35¾ acres

Units in Exposition Grounds

League Island Park and adjacent private grounds.....	450 acres
Flying Field	120 acres
Auto Parking	300 acres
Municipal Flying Field	90 acres
Military Camp	40 acres
Philadelphia Navy Yard	1000 acres

Total area of Exposition grounds

including Navy Yard.....	2000 acres
Individual items in the above:—	
Gladway—with over a mile and a quarter frontage	130 acrese
Lagoons	12 acres

\$25,000 IN LOST GEMS SAFE IN VAULT FIVE YEARS

Jewelry valued at more than \$25,000 and owned by W. Atmore Robinson, which disappeared five years ago, was found to-day by accident in a safe deposit box in the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel, Philadelphia. It had reposed there untouched while detectives searched near and far for it.

The recovery was a great relief to Albert L. Hoskins, a friend to whom Robinson gave the gems for safe keeping at a farewell party in the hotel in 1920 before he sailed for Europe. The next day Hoskins could not recall where he had put them.

Recently a customer of the hotel wanted to place some valuables in the vault and was told that it was full. When this was reported to the management every box was opened to see if there was not one vacant. One box contained the missing jewels with a card attached identifying them as the property of Robinson and stating they had been left by Hoskins.

BOY HURLED 20 FEET

Blown twenty feet into the air by an explosion in an electric conduit which occurred lately, just as he rode his bicycle across a manhole cover in Lawrence avenue, Flushing, Queens, Arthur Leonard, 9 years old, is in Flushing Hospital with a fractured skull.

The iron cover, the bicycle and the boy were carried into the air together, the force of the explosion tearing a hole twenty feet in diameter and fifteen feet deep in the street. The cover broke and fragments scattered, some, it is believed, striking the boy. The boy and his wrecked bicycle dropped back into the hole, and narrowly

escaped a police car containing two patrolmen which was halted at the brink of the suddenly formed cavity.

A second manhole blew up a moment later a block away. Chemists of the New York and Queens Light and Power Company are investigating possible causes of the explosions.

SESQUI TOURISTS WILL VISIT FRANKLIN'S GRAVE

Impressive ceremonies at the grave of Benjamin Franklin are included in the program of celebrations to be held during the Sesquicentennial International Exposition. Nationally famed orators will speak on this memorable occasion.

The remains of the statesman, scientist and philosopher who played so important a part in bringing about the Declaration of Independence of which he was one of the signers, lie in Christ Church burying ground at Fifth and Arch Streets, one of the busiest sections of Philadelphia, and only two blocks away from Independence Hall.

This shrine of patriotism will be visited by millions of visitors to the Exposition.

Standing in front of the gymnasium of the University of Pennsylvania is a statue of Benjamin Franklin, picturing him on his arrival in Philadelphia with his earthly possessions tied in a handkerchief, slung over his shoulder. As he was only 17 years of age at this time, Philadelphia claims him as her own, and with deepest gratitude acknowledges his many invaluable services to city and nation.

Franklin is well called the "Founder of American Institutions." He projected the college which later became the University of Pennsylvania, now famed throughout the world as an institution of learning.

The Pennsylvania Hospital, founded by Franklin, has carried on its work of mercy through all the years and ranks with the foremost hospitals of the country.

Franklin also founded the still influential American Philosophical Society and made plans for the first public library. The reading public of the present day has reason to thank him for our well-equipped libraries which bring knowledge within the reach of everyone.

He also established one of the first printing offices in Philadelphia, publishing Poor Richard's Almanac, which was not only a calendar, but a continuous stream of fun, dealing with the real things of life in the inimitable manner of which Franklin was master.

In this 20th century of steam-heated houses we find it hard to realize the discomforts suffered by the people of bygone days. Franklin designed a stove which proved a veritable blessing.

Keen interest in science was manifested in Pennsylvania at this time, spurring Franklin in experiments which resulted in the invention of the lightning rod.

Freedom in speech and action was to Franklin the only possible mode of government. He was conspicuously unselfish when the appeal was to his public spirit or to his interest in the general welfare of mankind. His life was one of service.

GOOD READING

\$10 BUYS \$10,000 VIOLIN

Joseph Rice, plumber, and erstwhile junk dealer, of Fifth Avenue, College Point, L. I., recently bought a modest looking violin, in fair condition, at a sale of odds and ends in Brooklyn. He paid \$10. It was recently appraised by experts in Manhattan at \$10,000.

The violin, said to be a Stradivarius, remains in the possession of Mr. Rice, who is reported to have rejected a large offer from a Manhattan music publishing company.

NEXT ECLIPSE

The next total solar eclipse will be in Sumatra very soon and already astronomers from Swarthmore College, the United States Naval Observatory have sailed to observe it, but before many years have elapsed people in the northeastern part of the United States will again have an opportunity of witnessing this rare phenomenon. On August 3, 1932, a total eclipse will occur and pass through parts of Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine. This eclipse will start near the North Pole, and the path of totality will enter the country in Northern Vermont, and will leave across the Atlantic Ocean between Portland, Me., and Portsmouth, N. H. As this will occur about 3:30 in the afternoon, the chances for clear weather should be fairly good.

MUSKRATS YIELD MILLIONS

In Louisiana a man started raising muskrats several years ago. The little bead-eyed animal did not impress anyone favorably, but last year the inhabitants along the Gulf of Mexico sold 6,000,000 hides at a price of about \$1 each.

This is certainly a vindication of the little animal. The revenue derived from the sale of the pelts of the muskrat has made Louisiana one of the greatest fur producing States of the Union. Insignificant muskrats give great values to marsh lands hitherto unproductive, and Department of Agriculture has requested Vernon Bailey, able naturalist, to see what he can do in making the Louisiana industry permanent.

A crop of 6,000,000 muskrats a year represents interest on \$100,000,000 at 6 per cent. And then the muskrat requires no care. The race is self-perpetuating and requires no expenditure for the young.

WASHINGTON'S CROSSING OF THE DELAWARE

The tale of one of the most heroic and significant chapters in American history, that of Washington's crossing of the Delaware and the resultant victories at Trenton and Princeton, will be told in terms of stark realism to the millions of visitors to the Sesquicentennial International Exposition which opens in Philadelphia, June 1, 1926.

Howe held Philadelphia, Cornwallis was at Princeton, and Rall with 1400 men, mostly Hessians, was at Trenton. The small army at Valley Forge, challenged by the hardships of a severe winter, endured the ordeals of starvation and cold. Weary, half clad, poorly-shod men responded to Washington's orders to advance. In a cold and blinding snow the army began its march to Trenton. Undaunted by the distance the soldiers trudged the white snow for twenty miles, leaving behind a trail in their footprints of blood.

On the night before Christmas, 1776, on the west side of the river and nine miles above Trenton, Washington determined to attack the force of Hessians quartered in that city. He divided his forces into three columns and ordered them across the Delaware. Two columns were forced to turn back because of the difficulties of the passage. A terrific storm and an ice-filled river demanded every atom of strength. It remained for the third column, with which Washington himself marched, to cross the river to the north bank, advance eight miles through sleet, and surround the Hessians.

On Christmas morning in the midst of the revelry of the Hessians, who, boasting of their prowess and invincible strength, were celebrating the Yuletide, Washington made his surprise attack. He forced them to battle and captured a thousand men. Rall was killed in battle and the Hessians were taken to Pennsylvania as prisoners-of-war.

With renewed impetus, Washington and his forces recrossed the Delaware and again faced the enemy, who concentrated a strong force at Trenton. Leaving the camp fires burning brightly, he slipped away during the night, passed the British flank, and on the morning of January 3, 1777, defeated a strong force at Princeton.

In the exhibit of New Jersey, which embodies the reconstruction of the Hessian barracks at Trenton, will be portrayed the site of the battle that marked the turn of the tide of American fortunes during the Revolutionary War.

The war of 1776 marked the darkest day of the Colonial cause. When the fate of Independence seemed doomed to disaster, when the colonists felt that theirs was a struggle without gain, and when faith gave way to dismay, it was Washington to whom the people looked for hope and courage. The tale of his crossing of the Delaware has become an epic.

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BRIEF BUT POINTED

A WONDERFUL DISCOVERY.

Unightly weeds along the garden path are doomed, according to information from Germany. Certain compounds have just been patented that may be added to the gravel before laying the paths in order to prevent any weeds from growing, or they may be powdered or sprayed on the weeds to kill them. The most potent of these compounds are the sodium and calcium paratoluene sulphonamides.

1,000 HUNGARIAN SOLDIERS, LOST NINE YEARS AGO, FOUND

The unexpected return of a Hungarian soldier, believed long dead, has cleared up the mystery surrounding the disappearance of 1,000 soldiers of Austro-Hungary nine years ago. Known to have been captured by the Russian army in the Carpathians in 1916 and reported as having been sent to Siberia, all trace of the men vanished years ago and they were thought to have perished.

Now, by the return of the soldier, it is known that the 1,000 have settled in the bleak territory to which they were sent, founded five villages and traveled well on the way to the development of 400,000 acres of land allotted to them by the Soviet Government. Furthermore, they have married Tartar, Mongol and Chinese wives, and are so well content with their lot that they will remain permanently in their new homes.

The villages of the prisoners are on the side of the Amur River near the Chinese-Mongolian border. They were exiled to the place by the old Russian Government and were soon forgotten. Slowly they turned their attention to agriculture and various other trades. Most of them were former Hungarian army officers, nearly all university graduates. Among them are a university professor, three doctors, an architect, two Catholic priests, a rabbi, while all others are masters of valuable trades.

The foundation of these villages came with the Russian revolution. The prisoners had two choices; one was not to recognize the Red Government and suffer further punishment as prisoners; the other choice was to join the Red army. Although all of them were against the Soviet idea, still the latter choice was better for them.

They joined the army and they were placed in the same battalion. The Reds gave them about 400,000 acres of land, agricultural machinery, domestic animals and everything the farmers need, and they were to guard the border from Mongolian and Chinese attacks.

That was the beginning of the villages. They built houses, agricultural buildings, brick factories and a flour mill. Within a short time they had formed a small industrial centre in a territory where only wild tribes existed.

They all married Chinese, Mongolian, Korean and Russian girls, but an interesting thing is that they didn't forget their mother language. Not only that, but they created a new European civilization. They built churches and schools where the Hungarian language is spoken.

Money is a thing unknown to them. Business is done by the ancient methods of exchange. Most of their output is sold in Vladivostok, where their business also is transacted in the exchange of their produce for articles they need.

NEW SOUNDING MACHINES

New electrically-driven sounding machines which have been perfected by the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey for the rapid determination of the depth of the ocean and the nature of its bed as well as of its water at various depths, are so efficient that a sounding three miles deep may now be taken in only one and one-half hours, says *Scientific American*.

The new machine consists of a reel having a diameter of a little less than two feet, driven by a two horse power electric motor which obtains its supply of current from the ship's generator. On this reel is wound 4,000 fathoms or nearly five miles of standard hard-drawn, steel piano-wire of No. 21 Brown and Sharp gauge. This size of wire is about half the diameter of the average pencil lead, yet it must be able to withstand a stress of 100 pounds without breaking.

The use of such small wire as this has several advantages which may best be demonstrated by an account of the material formerly employed. Long ago, hemp rope was used. This was extremely clumsy when used for deep sounding. It was supplanted in 1872 by wire. Nevertheless the wire at first used had to be quite large in diameter, for it had to be strong enough to draw the sounding weight, some sixty pounds of metal, back to the surface against the water friction on thousands of feet of wire and of the weight itself.

Later, the detachable sinker was invented, instead of pulling both wire and sinker up after the sounding had been made, the sinker automatically drops off when it strikes the bottom, a detaching device effecting this purpose very simply. The sinker is, of course, thrown away forever, but it has little value. The wire alone may then be drawn to the surface comparatively rapidly without danger of being broken.

The reel now used holds 24,000 feet of wire and when it is seen that each turn is wound with a tension of 100 pounds it is evident that the total compression on the drum, when all the wire has thus been wound up, is about 400 tons. Therefore, the reel must be of very sturdy construction. Its rim is five and one-half inches wide and three inches thick; of which a part must be cut away to permit of reeling the wire on it.

It is interesting to note that this cut for retaining the wire on the reel is only four inches wide by one and one-half inches deep; yet is suffices to hold the entire five miles of wire. This conveys an impression of the small size of the piano wire used.

In making a sounding to 18,000 feet depth, one-half hour is required for the descent of the sinker, and one hour for reeling in the wire. It has been found that the electrically driven machine reels in the wire about 30 per cent. faster than the older type of reel.

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NEW CAMERA takes and finishes photos in one minute. Make money selling cameras, or taking photos. Exclusive territory. Crown Co., Dept. 967, Norwalk, Conn.

HELP WANTED

DETECTIVES needed everywhere. Big pay, experience unnecessary, easily learned, 17 to 45, write Earl Wilcox, 1407 Lafayette Ave., SE, Grand Rapids, Mich.

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PERSONAL

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FOR A DIME (coin) I will tell the day of the week for any date for the last 400 years. G. E. Hayes, Box 157, Newberry, S. C.

TOBACCO OR SNUFF HABIT CURED OR no pay. \$150 if cured. Remedy sent on trial. Superba Co., N4, Baltimore, Maryland.

CHICAGO BOASTS LARGEST MEADOW PARK IN U.S.

The largest clear, level grass meadow in any park in the United States is the one in Washington Park, in Chicago, says an Associated Press dispatch. It has an area of 101.7 square acres, which is nearly one-third of the total area of the park.

The meadow is as level as engineering skill can make it, and is covered with a velvet coat of grass. There is space for 280 perfect football grid-irons, 125 baseball fields and more than 1,800 tennis courts.

Here Chicago's multitudes find room to "stretch their legs." The meadow is surrounded by shaded walks and pleasure drives, miniature lakes and flower gardens. The famous "Bug Club," an institution unique to Chicago, meets at this spot. Men, women and children of every description gather in groups to listen to soap-box orators and demagogues deliver impassioned messages. It is a place where the American right to absolute freedom of speech is unhampered.

Washington Park is the second largest of Chicago's parks, ranking next to Jackson, which has an area of 554 acres.

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FROM EVERYWHERE

PURSE WITH \$500 IN SECRET FOLDS

Somewhere in Brooklyn, N. Y., there is a prominent Brooklynite (name withheld) who is happy today because a wallet stolen from him Saturday has been returned to him with the \$500 it contained still intact.

Somewhere in the city today there is a pickpocket (name not known) who feels like going out and giving himself a swift kick when he reads this.

Somewhere in the United States there is a manufacturer of trick pocketbooks with concealed compartments who will feel proud of himself when he reads this and use it as an "ad" for his product.

And somewhere in town is Postal Carrier J. G. Ruhlman of 10712 12th st., Richmond Hill, whose honesty made this story possible and who has caused the prominent Brooklynite to be happy, the pickpocket to be disgusted with himself and the manufacturer of queer pocketbooks to be proud.

Postmaster Firmin in giving the details of all this said that the identity of the "prominent Brooklynite" was withheld, "as provided by the postal regulations."

"Pickpockets seem to have a predilection," said Mr. Firmin, "for disposing of 'lifted' wallets in mail boxes. Carrier Ruhlman, making a late Saturday collection, found the wallet in the box before 64 Court st. and turned it in. The wallet contained business, visiting and fraternity cards, also a membership card of the Elks.

"When we telephoned the owner he said it had also contained \$500. A further close inspection of the wallet unearthed \$300 in one secret compartment, then \$100 in another and finally the last \$100, representing the full amount. The purse was stolen, the owner said, while he was riding in a surface car."

THE GRAVE OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Patches of sunlight streaming in through the iron gate of the Christ Church Burying Ground in Philadelphia, reveal a simple inscription on a plain flat slab, the grave of Benjamin Franklin.

It is a lowly grave, a worthy tribute to the unpretentious qualities of the man. It is easily seen from Arch Street, as it is close to the northwest wall of the burying-ground.

During the Sesquicentennial International Exposition, commemorating the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of American Independence, which will open in Philadelphia, on June 1, 1926, millions of visitors will pay silent homage to Franklin, whose share in drawing up the Constitution of the United States was one of the crowning glories of his life work.

The remains of Franklin were interred on April 21, 1790. His body was placed beside that of his wife. "Benjamin and Deborah Franklin, 1790," thus only is his grave marked.

The funeral procession, headed by the clergy of the city, attracted an immense crowd estimated to have numbered more than 20,000. Minute guns were fired and bells tolled.

Distinguished honors were paid to his memory. Members of Congress resolved to wear mourning for one month. In France, the news of his death was received with expressions of sorrow and respect.

The casual passerby may wonder that no larger and statelier tombstone was left to mark the remains of Franklin. It was the emphatic request of the seer that his grave be marked by but an unadorned small gravestone.

Each year on the birthday of Franklin, members of the "Poor Richard" Club, an organization of advertising men in Philadelphia, place a wreath upon the grave of its patron saint.

Franklin left mightier memorials to the world than the world could have left to the memory of Franklin. Philosopher, scientist, statesman, inventor, educator, philanthropist, that he was, he contributed worthily to the civilization of his times.

Upon the diplomatic stage of the Colonies he played an important role. Matched against the wits of England in the dispute against the Stamp Act, he was supreme.

He was the first to utilize electricity; he was the leader in matters of street paving and fire protection. He was the founder of the American Philosophical Society, the University of Pennsylvania, and the Pennsylvania Hospital. He became president of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery.

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